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**THE**  
**DIVINE ORIGIN**  
**OF**  
**CHRISTIANITY.**  
  
**VOL. II.**



**THE**  
**DIVINE ORIGIN**  
**OF**  
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①

THE  
DIVINE ORIGIN  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY,  
DEDUCED FROM SOME OF THOSE  
**Evidences**  
WHICH  
ARE NOT FOUNDED  
ON THE  
AUTHENTICITY OF SCRIPTURE.

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BY  
JOHN SHEPPARD,  
AUTHOR OF "THOUGHTS ON PRIVATE DEVOTION," &c.

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"Quæ tandem mens avida æternitatis, vitæque præsentis brevitate permota,  
contra hujus divinæ auctoritatis lumen cultumque contendat?"

*Augustin. ad Volus.*

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IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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## CHAPTER IX.

### ON SOME PARTS OF THE PROOF FOR CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

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#### SECTION I.

##### *The firm belief and testimony of the fact.*

AT the commencement of this work, we inferred from the singular characteristics of primitive Christianity, that it could not be a fiction of men ; and, in subsequent chapters, that, had it been so, it could not, from its character and origin, have been, in the actual circumstances, successful :—or, in other words, we contended, first, that the very existence or publication of such a scheme of doctrine, with a view to its being propagated, is in some sense miraculous ;—and, secondly, that on account of this its character, combined with its dis-

advantageous origin and the great obstacles actually opposed to it, it could not have triumphed as it did without some other miracle, or rather some series of miracles, in its support :—for, that which is a morally miraculous feature in its scheme—the absence of accommodation to all the corrupt tastes of mankind—was, in fact, a miracle of *repulsion*; adapted to preclude its acceptance, unless that acceptance had been urged by some strong counter-active attestations of divinity. The religion needed other miracles (more strictly so called, as being of a physical kind), not merely to uphold and dignify its external feebleness and meanness, but to countervail, as it were, the repelling moral miracle of its pure sublimity and unbending dictation.

But it concerns us much to know, if it may be, from similar sources of information, what these miracles, or some of them, were : and I hope we may at least ascertain what was the chief and most important one ; inferring, from several undeniable premises, the reality of that great event, which, as will soon be more fully argued, appears completely indispensable to the original progress of the religion ; namely, the resurrection of its founder from death.

We may commence this inquiry by observing, that the choice and act of every primitive Christian, —that of embracing and adhering to the persecuted

name and institutions of a condemned and buried leader,—at the risk of spoliation and all kinds of sufferings—necessarily *implied* a firm belief in *this special* vindication of his previous claims. For what other vindication could be satisfactory? In no age, (but least of all in an age when the powers of magic, as we shall see hereafter, were deemed indefinitely and even immensely great,) could prior miracles, real or apparent, be held to substantiate the divine commission of one that had utterly failed to “save *himself* :” nor could any subsequent wonders, wrought by his attendants, prove more, than that they shared the occult arts of their late instructor; which were likely to procure for themselves the same ignominious end, the same final and unredeemed defeat. It would be absurd to suppose that any adult person freely embraced this religion in the times of Claudius or Nero, or indeed during the whole age of persecutions, without a *firm belief* that Jesus was not under the dominion of death.\* This belief is besides suffi-

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\* Perhaps it would not be too much to affirm, that *every* ancient writing connected with the subject of Christianity, canonical or not so, genuine or spurious, friendly or hostile, either expresses or implies the resurrection of Jesus to have been the original and cardinal point of Christian *belief*. Even the third epistle of John, (a short letter to Gaius,) though it



ciently implied, if only in what Pliny writes of their accustomed worship, “the hymn to Christ as to a God;”<sup>b</sup> for who can conceive of a poor man crucified and buried in Judæa being adored as a God in Pontus; except by those who fully believed that he had been rescued “from the power of the grave?” Even Lucian intimates this to be the fundamental and distinguishing article of the Christian faith, when he observes, “these miserales [οἱ κακοδαίμονες]

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does not name our Saviour or allude to his resurrection, yet decidedly implies this belief by referring to the existence and trials of Christian churches, and to those who “for his name’s sake,” (or ‘for the name’)\* “went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.”—Who can imagine suffering societies, generous hosts, and laborious missionaries, all “for the name” and cause of one whom they did not *believe* to have triumphed over a shameful doom? The resurrection of Christ was the very watchword of the primitive church. Dr. Young, writing to the poet Klopstock, says, (in reference to an inscription on his wife’s monument,) “its last word was the common salutation of the primitive Christians when they met each other—*resurrexit!*” I cannot withhold his devout and beautiful reflection,—“should not our hearts burn within us at the blessed sound? That word carries in it all our hope and joy. We shall soon bury all our other hope and joy, never to rise again; and shall beings that have no end, prize any thing that has?”†

<sup>b</sup> Ad Trajan.

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\* v. 7. See Griesbach’s text.

† Memoir of F. and M. Klopstock.

have entirely persuaded themselves, that they shall be immortal, and live throughout all ages; wherefore they despise death,"<sup>c</sup> &c. It was well known to him, and to his readers, that the doctrine of immortality had been held forth to the people by many distinguished philosophers, and was taught by the chief sects among the Jews. The new and firmer assurance of it, therefore, which marked the Christians, so as to explain their unprecedented "contempt of death," and "willingness to meet it," must have been grounded on a new and distinct basis; which could be no other than the firm and uniform belief of their master's resurrection. Unless they had been first "entirely persuaded"

\* De Mort. Pereg. (in Lar. iv. 150, and in B. pr. p. 229,) where the original is with this punctuation, *πιπεικασι γαρ αυτους οι κακοδαιμονες το μεν'ολον, αθαναστοι εισσθαι, κ. τ. λ.* But the punctuation is arbitrary, and the passage may perhaps as well be rendered, "these unhappy men persuade themselves that they are *altogether* immortal, and shall live for ever." So Dr. Gregory Sharpe translates it,\* and adds, "Here Lucian seems to allude to the resurrection of the body, as well as the immortality of the soul." Nothing is more probable than that he should do so, because that tenet was perfectly well known and specially despised by heathens; however, I have preferred arguing from the other translation.

\* Defence of Christianity.

that he who was "crucified in Palestine" had risen from the tomb, there could be no stronger ground, in their case, for assurance of a future life, than in that of other philosophic or religious sects. It would surely have added no weight to the prior evidence from reason, (in some minds it might have seemed to detract from it,) that this doctrine had been insisted on by one who was regarded in his own country as a seducer and blasphemer, and, as such, had been disgracefully executed.

The resurrection of Jesus was also made the subject of an express weekly commemoration in the apostolic age. Barnabas, in his Catholic Epistle,<sup>d</sup> writes, after quoting Isaiah i. 18,—“consider what he means by it; the sabbaths, says he, which ye now keep are not acceptable unto me, but those which I have made; when resting from all things I shall begin the eighth day, that is, the beginning of the other world. For which cause we observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and having been manifested, ascended into the heavens.”<sup>e</sup> Ignatius, who was

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<sup>d</sup> Which Archb. Wake and Dr. Lardner both account genuine, but which, even if it were not so, is of very high antiquity, and therefore good testimony for ancient practice.

<sup>e</sup> Patr. Apost. Ed. Cotel. t. i. p. 47, and Wake's Epistles, pp. 187—8.

ordained A. D. 69, i. e. thirty-six years after the crucifixion, (or, as some think, earlier,)<sup>f</sup> and suffered martyrdom under Trajan, writes, "not sabbatizing," (i. e. not keeping the Jews' sabbath) "but living a Lord's day life, on which day our life arose through him."<sup>g</sup> Justin Martyr asks of the Jew Trypho, "Is there any thing else which you reprehend in us except this, that we do not live according to the law, and are not circumcised, and do not sabbatize like you?"<sup>h</sup> And he states in his first apology, that "*all, whether in cities or in the country places,*" held an assembly "on the day called Sunday," and this "because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, on that day arose from the dead."<sup>i</sup> Nothing, I presume, can be devised, which shall more strongly attest the full and uniform belief of an event, than so frequent and universal a commemoration.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>f</sup> See Lar. i. 313.

<sup>g</sup> Original in Lar. ii. 433.—κατα την κυριακην ζων ζυντες.

<sup>h</sup> Dial. p. 155, Ed. Thirlb. See on this subject, Supplement (A.) to the present section.

<sup>i</sup> Apol. i. pp. 97—8, Ed. Thirlb.

<sup>k</sup> Pliny appears to refer to this when he writes, "they affirmed that they had been used to convene *before the dawn, on a stated day*, and to sing a hymn," &c. What could be more apposite to the commemoration of an event which was believed to have happened "while it was yet dark," or before "it began to dawn towards the first day of the week."

The belief in a final resurrection of the same body at the last day, that Christian doctrine which was to heathens a perpetual topic of derision,<sup>1</sup> is a further strong pledge for their assured conviction of the resurrection of Jesus. For what could induce their adherence to the expectation of a thing apparently impossible, without that appropriate earnest of its truth which was afforded by the personal resurrection of Him who taught it? If they had not been firmly assured of the less miracle, how can it be imagined, that, in spite of philosophic and popular contempt, they would predict and expect the greater?<sup>m</sup>

We have argued the firm belief of the first Christians in the resurrection of Jesus,—from its being the *sole* attestation of his claims and promises which could warrant or account for their readiness to suffer in his cause,—or could prompt them to adore him,—or could give them that *peculiar* assurance of immortality which heathens ascribe to their creed;—we have also observed how strongly this belief is shown both by their observance of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Celsus, in ch. vii. above (vol. i. p. 322); and Tertulian Apol. c. 48, qu. in Jortin's Remarks, vol. ii. p. 9.

<sup>m</sup> See Supplement (B.) to this section, where it is argued that the variations of heretical theory do (at the least,) not weaken this conclusion.

Lord's day, and by their general adherence to that doctrine of a future resurrection which the pagan world derided.<sup>a</sup>

But if it be incontrovertible that such, and so firm, in the apostolic age, was their belief of this event, may we not safely conclude that it could rest on nothing less than the fullest testimony of the event believed? Be it remembered, that, by the admission of Jews and heathens themselves, a multitude of those who believed it were natives of the city or country where it was affirmed to have happened;<sup>o</sup> and those of more distant countries were not unused to travel, or backward to take that pains in any case of importance. Lucian has told us that when Peregrinus "was sojourning with their priests and scribes about *Palestine*,"—"even from the cities of Asia some Christians came to him

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<sup>a</sup> One of the invectives of Celsus brings several of these arguments together. "Are not these *absurdities* of yours, to desire and hope for the body, that this same shall rise,—as if nothing belonged to us better or more precious,—and yet to consign or cast it [*πικτεῖν*] to punishments, as if worthless."\* Absurdities *indeed*, unless founded on that firm and *peculiar* assurance which Christ's resurrection inspired.

<sup>o</sup> See Ch. viii. above, vol. i. pp. 345-6.

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\* Orig. l. viii. p. 409, qu. in-Lar. iv. 132.

by an order of the body, to relieve and comfort him."<sup>p</sup> Now even if the resurrection of Jesus had not been preached in *other* countries by professed eye witnesses,—which, however, Julian himself attests that it was, when he speaks of the tomb of Peter, and the observations of John,—<sup>q</sup> yet all the first race of believers in Jerusalem and Judæa, must, in order to their belief of this fact, have been taught by those who professed to have seen and conversed with Jesus risen.<sup>r</sup> It is inconceivable

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<sup>p</sup> See vol. 1. pp. 138 and 346.

<sup>q</sup> In Cyr. l. x. quoted in Lar. iv. 336.

<sup>r</sup> It should not be overlooked that the Christians to whom Lucian more especially refers, when he describes them as (in common with all their brethren) "persuaded" of immortality and "contemning death," were Christians of *Palestine*. He relates, as we have just seen, that "Peregrinus associated with their priests and scribes about Palestine" [*πρὸς τὴν παλαιστίνην τοῖς ἱερευσὶ καὶ γραμματευσὶ αὐτῶν συγγηγομενός*], i. e. in different parts of those regions. Dr. Lardner is of opinion that the time of this philosopher's Christianity was "the early part of his life, and that his imprisonment upon that account must have been in the time of Trajan, or Adrian at the latest."<sup>\*</sup> These Christian "priests and scribes," (as Lucian terms the elders and teachers who instructed him,) might have all seen St. John and other apostles or apostolic men, without leaving their own homes; and if any of them were fifty years older than their catechumen, which is

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<sup>\*</sup> Lar. iv. 151.

that they should have adhered to a crucified person in the very scenes of his previous life and public execution, without such attestations from his immediate followers and companions. We have learnt that the suffering Christians in the cities of Asia Minor, in an age when we might expect their zeal to have abated, deputed certain of their number to visit a single suffering brother in Palestine. Is it to be believed that these habits, of prompt and pains-taking communication with each other, did not arise and flourish most in the *first* age? And if so, can it be doubted that many, both of those who were "almost" and of those who were "altogether" Christians, in different provinces, took journies in order to scrutinize the grounds of that faith on which their hard self-denial and exalted charity, with those of their kindred, were to be

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entirely probable, these may have seen Jerusalem standing and conversed with many who testified that they had seen Jesus risen. These were the second generation of Jewish believers. Their parents also had been "entirely persuaded" and "contemned death." Was this, or were the many other sacrifices involved in this new creed, likely to be made, by either generation, for a *false* or *suspicious* story? Is such a self-denial and renunciation of worldly advantages the common temper of *Jews*, or does it appear ever to have been so, except as far as a scrupulous adherence to their *ancient* and *national* creed required it?



or had been built? Some, no doubt, (nay multitudes) in heathen lands, had been themselves, wholly or partially, converted *by* professed eye-witnesses;\* but let it be supposed, for argument's sake, that a greater number were addressed only by the converts and companions of such; can it be questioned that a proportion of these were resolved, either before fully embracing the religion, or else in order to their subsequent support in the trials to which it had exposed them, to see and hear some of those original witnesses?—If this could not be the case at their own abodes, or in a neighbouring city or province, was there any thing too great for the occasion in a visit, personally, or by deputation, to Judæa? The occasion was no less than their being convinced or undeceived, as to a fact for which they either had ventured, or were meditating to venture, “the loss of all things.” “We ought not to fear that we deceive ourselves,” observes Abbadie, “in supposing that the first Christians had some common sense. People who professed to despise the polytheism in which they.

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\* There has been already adduced both Jewish and heathen testimony, that the personal companions of Jesus were the chief original teachers and propagators of his religion. (In vol. 1. pp. 90-2, and pp. 345-6.)

had been educated,<sup>t</sup> who practised so wise a morality, were so regular in their conduct, and so much hated those excesses which disturb the understanding; and who formed such sound notions of the divinity, can hardly be considered devoid of natural light.<sup>u</sup> But it is difficult to conceive that persons who had a spark of good sense should renounce their property and security, and expose themselves to death, for this cause, if they had not powerful reasons to believe it a *good* one.” “ If Jesus was

<sup>t</sup> This particular phrase does not, of course, apply to Jewish Christians; but if the reader substitute in reference to them “people who separated from that religious system itself, in contrast with which they viewed the polytheism of the nations as both weak and wicked,” the argument will surely lose nothing by the change.

<sup>u</sup> See on this the note of the Abbé Bullet, concerning Bayle’s insinuations. (Ch. x. sect. 1, below.)

In the acts of martyrs, Maximus exclaims to Probus, “Wilt thou not cease from thy mania, but persist, oh wretched one?” To which he answers—“I am not mad, but being more *wise* than you, [ὁμῶς δὲ φρονιμώτερος ὢν], I do not worship demons.”\*

<sup>v</sup> Rel. Chret. t. ii. pp. 9—10. We may add to this a just observation of Bishop Marsh:—“The primitive Christians were not so credulous as our adversaries have represented them. If they *had* been thus credulous, we should never have heard of doubts entertained about *any* book of the New Testament. Lectures, Pt. v. p. 56.

\* Ruinart. Act. sinc. p. 423.

not risen, the faith of the first Christians was utterly groundless. But he who is ever so little versed in the human heart, will not be able to imagine people renouncing the prejudices of birth and education, and doing violence to their dearest inclinations, by embracing a reviled and persecuted faith, (at a period when full inquiry was *practicable*) without examining the truth of the facts on which it rests,\* and well knowing why they embraced it.”<sup>2</sup> We may, perhaps, best convince the reader how incredible it is, that the Christian converts, cotemporary with the apostles, should have generally given a remiss uninquiring assent, by putting the case as his own.—Is he an infidel? Then, probably, whether the fact of Christ’s resurrection had been preached to him by a convert of Peter or John, or by Peter and John themselves, he would alike have treated it as a falsehood or an “idle tale,” and would neither have waited to listen to the doctrine, nor to observe the miracles which introduced

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\* As we have elsewhere observed, (in Appendix II. at the end of this volume,) it avails nothing to object,—the Christians of following ages embraced it so, and why not the *first*?—The case of Christians in every following age was altogether different. They *could not* personally converse with professed eye-witnesses. They had, however, a collection of written testimonies which the first did not possess, and some other advantages which we shall point out in the sequel.

<sup>2</sup> Abbad. Rel. Chret. t. ii. p. 10, with some alteration.

or seconded it. The same indifference and incredulity which could have made him distrust the professed eye-witnesses, amidst their zeal, hardships, and perils, would much more have prevented his inquiring further, had the testimony reached him at second hand. And such, no doubt, was the temper of multitudes, who in that age rejected the Gospel.

But are you a doubting believer?—that is, while convinced of the deep importance of Christianity, are you assailed with frequent and anxious doubts as to its truth? If then this faith had been proposed to you as a Jew of Palestine, in the time of Caligula; if the sole fact on which its truth could be for a moment sustained—the resurrection of Jesus—had been urged on you with effect, by one or more teachers, not claiming to have themselves seen or conversed with Jesus risen, but only with his Apostles, is it possible that, with your temper of mind, you would not have sought out those professedly original witnesses;—or that, if first taught by one such, you would not have compared, solicitously, the separate testimony of others?

Is your faith, on the other hand, of a very firm and unhesitating character? Does it rest rather on the self-evidencing divinity, suitableness, and glory of the *doctrines* of Christ, than on the historical testimony of his resurrection and miracles?

Such, we doubt not, was the case with many who, in the *first* age, embraced the gospel. They “saw a great light;” they hailed a great “redemption.” They felt, as awakened sinners, that a message so divinely adapted to their spiritual state and necessities *could* not be the “the word of man.” They were more occupied and constrained by the embassy itself, than by the envoy’s credentials.<sup>7</sup> You would have been one of those most grateful and happy believers. But had you become so at Joppa, and in the time of Caligula or Claudius, do you think the strength and satisfactoriness of your conviction would have rendered you the less desirous to see, and hear, and converse with those who had seen your crucified and risen Saviour? Your supposed state of mind is clearly that which abounds most in love and reverence; and a devout curiosity or solicitude, concerning the object of these feelings, is inseparable from it. If

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<sup>7</sup> This may seem at variance with what has been said at the commencement of the present chapter, that the character of the Gospel was “a miracle of *repulsion*.” But I hope to show hereafter,\* that neither the present passage, nor a subsequent one of the same cast, are really irreconcilable with that previous statement.

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\* See ch. x. sect. 1, below.

your *faith* did not need to be confirmed, surely that *love* for Christ, and his chosen followers, which so confirmed a faith must have excited, would claim to be gratified. Can you believe that if you had lived at Damascus, and heard of Thomas sojourning at Gaza, or of an assembly of the first disciples at Jerusalem, you would not have sought and obtained, for once at least, the privilege of hearing from *their* lips the words and works of him whom they declared that they had seen risen from the grave, and ascending into heaven? If both the

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\* Journies or pilgrimages for religious purposes have been common in all ages, and in most countries; more especially among the Jews; for the male population went thrice yearly to Jerusalem, and Jews settled in remote countries did the same at least yearly.\* This fact of itself shows how natural and how easy an undertaking it would appear for converts or inquirers to travel thither, either to reassure their faith, or gratify their attachment. The martyr Pionius, in his address to the Gentiles and Jews of Smyrna says, "for I, having traversed the whole country of the Jews, have thoroughly learnt all things [cuncta perdidici;] and having passed the Jordan, saw the land which attested by its devastation the anger of the Lord," &c.† We do not bring Pionius as a witness, or effective inquirer; his age was too late:‡ but who will suppose such journies uncommon in the *preceding* ages?

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\* See Philo. qu. in ch. xii. sect. 3, below.

† Ruin. Act. sinc. p. 142.

‡ Probably A. D. 250.

doubting and the undoubting reader be conscious, that this would have been their own most anxious wish and resolution, though from somewhat different feelings, why should either hesitate to conclude that so men must have felt in the days of Claudius Cæsar?

We are far from arguing that *all* converts thus scrutinized the grounds of their faith. The infirm, the slave, and the dependent could not; though it is certain that in very many instances the suffering witnesses of the resurrection came to *them*, who could not have gone to seek the witnesses. But if only the hundredth part of the Christians of Nero's reign had visited the primitive churches of Judæa, what more could be necessary to show, that the resurrection of Jesus was earnestly affirmed, at all hazards, in the land, and even the city, where he was so lately crucified, by professed eye-witnesses? If it had been discovered *not* to be so affirmed, (at home as well as in foreign lands,) steadfastly and consistently in the face of opposition; or if equivocation or essential disagreement had been detected in the testimonies, who can conceive that this new profession, assaulted by every kind of enmity, would have maintained its ground, and gathered strength, either in Palestine or beyond it?

Further, we have reason to conclude, that the number of the professed eye-witnesses was not *small*.

I mean, (as we make no use of the books of the New Testament in this argument,) that we should have reason so to judge, although the Acts of the Apostles and the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>aa</sup> were not extant. For, if the event really happened, reason would certainly incline us to suppose that its reality was made apparent to a considerable number:<sup>bb</sup> and if it did not happen, it was very unlikely to have been so believed as we know it to have been, on the affirmation of a very *few*. But,

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<sup>aa</sup> Both of which inform us that their number was very considerable. Compare Acts i. 15—22. and 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>bb</sup> On this principle it was objected as early as the time of Celsus, that the risen Messiah did not show himself “to *all the people*.” It seems forgotten in the objection that it was quite as easy for the writers of the New Testament to have written “myriads” as “hundreds.” I know of no motive but veracity that can be assigned for their not doing so. They have said other things quite as liable to public contradiction as this would have been; such as the dumbness of Zacharias, and his recovery, the expulsion of the traders from the temple, the public entry of Jesus to the city, the healing of the lame man by Peter at the “beautiful gate.” Nay, *more* liable to contradiction, because all recorded to have happened in the most *public scene*; so that it was competent to ten thousand dispersed Jews, even long after Jerusalem was destroyed, to join in maintaining that no such occurrences in the capital were ever seen or heard of by them, or told them by their fathers. Whereas, if the authors of the



since it was thus, from the first, and perseveringly, affirmed and testified of, in the face of imminent sufferings and dangers, by many professed eye-witnesses, the event *must have really happened*.

Let us suppose their number only one hundred, or fifty, or even fewer: had it been alleged by only "two or three," and the circumstances of their testimony, when scrutinized, had been found substantially to coincide, *that* would surely suffice to destroy the hypothesis of fanatical or frantic illusion: for who has known or expected the dreams

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Gospels had written that Jesus was seen risen by three thousand disciples and five hundred enemies, or by a greater multitude, on a mountain or in a desert, it is obvious that the contradiction of this would have not had half as much force. I repeat therefore, no motive but a purpose of writing the truth, explains the very *limited* statements of the New Testament. It has been well shown by a French writer, that the public sensible proofs of Christ's resurrection could not have been possibly so multiplied and prolonged as to satisfy all, and that they must at last have terminated in historical attestation. (Princip. of Christian Religion, translated by Lally, Pt. III. c. x. vol. ii. pp. 166-70.) The whole argument deserves the reader's attention; as does also that different train of forcible and ingenious reasonings contained in four sermons of Bp. Horsley, who ably argues both the preferableness of "chosen witnesses," and the unfitness of Christ's showing himself to "all the people."\*

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\* Nine Sermons, &c. pp. 122—220.

of *two or three* distempered minds, circumstantially, or even substantially, to agree? Much more, who would believe that the false perceptions of *fifty* such should coalesce on comparison into any thing like a consistent and credible statement of fact?<sup>cc</sup> If Jesus, therefore, did not rise from the dead, we are necessarily thrown on the supposition of a falsehood and fraud,<sup>dd</sup> concerted between all those who professed to have seen him risen: a falsehood and fraud, be it also observed, of the

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<sup>cc</sup> "Let us suppose their sobriety of mind, and knowledge, and discernment ever so little, yet how could they all have been deceived in the *like manner*? How could it happen that some less visionary than the rest, did not detect the illusion? What was this appearance that deceived them, and what its cause?"\*

<sup>dd</sup> Dr. Doddridge has forcibly insisted on this. "Their life must have been one continued scene of perjury, and all the most solemn actions of it a profane and daring insult on Him whom they styled the God and Father of Christ. And the inhumanity would have equalled the impiety, for it was persuading men to venture their whole happiness on the power and fidelity of one whom, on this supposition, they knew to be an impostor, and to have justly suffered. To aim at this, moreover, in the midst of the most severe opposition, was to make themselves accessory to the ruin of thousands; all the calamities which fell on such proselytes or their descendants for the sake of Christianity, would be

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\* Lally's Principles, vol. ii. pp. 151—2, altered.

most nefarious kind. But that supposition is so far from tenable, that Dr. Paley considers it as "pretty generally given up"<sup>ee</sup> by unbelievers. Certainly, few things are less credible, than that a company of obscure persons, who had seen their leader publicly condemned and crucified, and must have felt all their hopes from him to be cruelly and disgracefully blasted, should have unanimously formed, and unshrinkingly pursued, a scheme so desperate as would almost ensure to themselves the same fate,—that of falsely affirming him to be risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and entitled to

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chargeable on their first teachers. The blood of pious and heroic persons, involuntarily deluded, would be crying for vengeance against them, and the distresses of widows and orphans would join to swell the account. So that, on the whole, the guilt of those who become victims of public justice for murder, or for treason, is *small* compared with that supposed. And can you in your heart believe the apostles of Jesus to have been these abandoned wretches, at once the reproach and astonishment of mankind? especially when it is considered, that from such an imposture they could have nothing to expect but ruin in this world, and condemnation in the next." (Serm. 2, on Evid. pp. 72—3, and 79, abridged.) See also Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles, who, after arguing that the apostles could not possibly be themselves deceived, says they must have been, if Jesus rose not from the dead, "disinterested incendiaries."—pp. 91-94-5.

<sup>ee</sup> Evid. vol. ii. 193.

the obedience and worship of mankind. Abbadie forcibly argues, that such an attempt would not have been *human*.<sup>6</sup> "It is impossible," (he observes,) "to find men sufficiently enemies to themselves, to defend a lie, which can have none but the most painful consequences. Nature does not accustom itself to pain, hardship, contempt, and infamy for their own sake. How can it be that a number of persons should have suddenly renounced the most uniform and inviolable feelings of nature, simply for the sake of maintaining that they saw what in fact they did not see?"

"Further, it is not natural or possible to maintain a lie with such firmness. A conscious impostor is continually subject to misgivings of remorse and

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"Yet, he considers (and, I think, justly,) *the other* supposition so extravagant—viz. that the disciples were themselves the subjects of an *illusion* as to Christ's resurrection and ascension,—that he says, "the proof of the truth of Christianity may be said to hinge *solely* on this one important question: namely, whether the disciples were *infidels*, who have wilfully deceived us, and given us false testimony. If we establish that this cannot be, then we prove invincibly the truth of our faith."\*

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\* Rel. Chret. t. ii. 236-7, and see Supplement (C.) to this Section.

fear. He at last betrays himself, either by confession, or by maintaining his deceit feebly. Thus men are constituted. A single person who was not so would be a prodigy. How much more a number of such persons—the continued and consistent union of many in this unnatural scheme!”<sup>gg</sup>

It is manifest that, with the recent lesson of their master’s doom before them, these persons could not be blind to the deep hazards attending their false testimony, both for themselves and all who should be persuaded by it. “And what was their comfort or support?—what was it that they sought to gain?—was it a guilty conscience? Did they renounce every outward blessing, in order that they might also forfeit all internal peace of mind? Did they court the cross, in order that they might obtain those after punishments which even *natural* religion presents to the terrified view of the guilty?”<sup>hh</sup>

<sup>gg</sup> Rel. Chret. t. ii. pp. 243-4, altered. See also Origen on this point. (cont. Cels. l. i. p. 24. Ed. Spenc.)

<sup>hh</sup> Evid. of Miracles (anonymous) Edin. 1802. p. 55, abridged. The able French writer before quoted, has put like arguments in a more unusual form, by framing a discourse supposed to be addressed to the followers of Christ, after his crucifixion, by some of their own number, in order to persuade them and himself to become *false* witnesses of his having risen. I cite some passages.—“It is not impossible to surmount our great difficulties, if we are but capable of impene-

I have said, few things are less credible than that such an imposture should be attempted:—but there is *one* thing less credible, (and which stands in immediate connexion with the subject,) namely, that such an imposture should *succeed*. The power and zealous hatred of the Sanhedrim against the

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trable secrecy,—we ought to make choice of faithful persons who can advance *falsity* with an intrepid air,” &c.—“It is necessary to foresee all pains and evils that are capable of extorting the secret.—But I must forewarn you, that in the greatest sufferings we are not to hope for the least comfort or assistance from conscience, but must stifle by resolution all remorses. Nor are we to expect any thing from him, for whom we are to pass our lives in fears and sufferings. For what can he do for us, who has been able to do nothing for *himself*? All our designs also, will prove abortive, if the fear of *God* should disturb them, and make us timid in the testimony we are determined to give against *Him*, in maintaining that he has raised again one whom he has left in the tomb. We shall grow easy by degrees, by imprinting strongly on our minds, that it is glorious to suffer without hope either from God or man; and even with a certainty of being punished by God and man, and not only in this life, but the next.”

He then proceeds to show, that in the prosecution of such an imposture they must utterly despise and abjure, in secret, the religion of their ancestors; and concludes by enjoining them to harden their hearts likewise against any compassion for those who shall be the persecuted victims and martyrs of their falsehood.” In reviewing this ironical address, the author strongly displays the impossibility of secrecy, among

## SUPPLEMENT.

## 1

THE VIOLATIONS OF CHRIST'S  
INSTRUCTION

A. D. 1800. THE EARLY authorities, (Ignatius, Irenaeus, &c.) the body of primitive Christians did not keep the Mosaic law, which affords a very weighty and strong evidence that Christ had taught, and intended a change in the most revered and most sacred laws. The Jews have been highly offensive by their adherence to the law, which Christ had taught to be adopted in the age immediately following his death. The Jews were the Church of Christ, and it was their duty to keep the law, which he had taught to be changed.

or interpolated epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, it is written, "let each of us sabbatize spiritually," &c. "And after having sabbatized, let every lover of Christ keep as a festival the Lord's day—the *rising day* [*το ἀναστήσειον*], the Queen, the *chief of all the days*," &c.\* So that where both days were observed, the Lord's day had a great pre-eminence given to it, for this express reason, that it was known to be the day when Christ arose.

So in the controversy of the second century, about Easter, which was kept by some churches "on the 14th day of the moon, on whatever day of the week it happened,"—but by most, "on the Lord's day following,"†—it was argued by the latter, that "they kept the custom hitherto prevailing, by virtue of apostolic tradition, that it was not fit for the fasts" (preceding Easter) "to be dissolved on any other day than that of the resurrection of our Saviour."‡ And Irenæus gave his judgment, "that it was right to perform the celebration [*το μυστήριον*] of the Lord's resurrection on the *Lord's day only*."§ There was entire and constant unanimity as to which was the actual day of the resurrection of Christ. Indeed, had there been the least uncertainty on that point, the other party might have argued this as an additional reason why they could allowably conform to the moveable time of the Jewish passover; which caused Easter to fall on the different days of the week: but this they did not.

\* Patr. Apost. Ed. Cotel. t. ii. p. 57.

† Euseb. E. H. l. 5. c. 23. p. 190.

‡ Luc. l. 412.

§ Ibid. p. 192.



innovation of Jesus have been sufficiently shown.<sup>ii</sup> Are we to imagine that this powerful enmity was lulled or paralysed by his death,—unless that event had, according to their desire and hope, paralysed and extinguished the sect? Would they not rather be in the utmost degree exasperated, at the attempt to revive this hated and defeated system by a daring falsehood, founded on that very act of judicial violence which they had themselves used to degrade and crush it?—We shall endeavour to show, in the ensuing section, that their powerful

many persons, all without conscience, all exposed to persecution; and the absurdity of supposing such determined impiety and hard-heartedness in the persons by whom the Christian faith was originally taught.\*—I have since discovered, that the *idea* of this discourse seems to be borrowed from Eusebius; though the details of it are different. The latter makes these impostors ask, “What absurdity is there in dying for nothing? Why should it grieve us to receive stripes and bodily tortures for the sake of nothing rational? And if there should be need to make trial of prisons, and dishonours, and revilings, for the sake of nothing true, let this also be our care; let us all be liars in unison, and feign for the profit of no one, neither of ourselves, nor of those whom we shall deceive, nor even of him who is deified by our falsehood.”†

<sup>ii</sup> In chap. iv. above, vol. i. pp. 152-163.

\* Lally, Princ. Christian Religion, part iii. c. v. vol. ii. pp. 174, et seqq.

† Dem. Evan. l. iii. p. 114.

resources and hostile activity could produce no *counter*-evidence of the least weight; not even a presumptive proof of illusion or imposture. This will be an advantageous addition to the present argument; yet not a necessary one; for the firm and concurrent belief of the earliest Christians, and of the successive converts of that age, in the fact that Jesus was risen (which has been here by several independent considerations evinced), of itself indicates that there could exist no valid *disproof*; that the evidence of the event was strong and irrefutable, and the event therefore real.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## A.

ON THE COMMEMORATIONS OF CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.

The fact thus established from such early authorities, (Ignatius, Barnabas, and Justin,)\* that the body of primitive Christians did not "sabbatize," did not keep the Mosaic sabbath, but the Lord's day instead of it, affords a very weighty implication. It shows that with all their Jewish bias, and that reverence for the decalogue which Christ had taught, they yet felt his resurrection *on the Sunday* to be an event of such certainty as to warrant a change in the most revered observance; a change that must have been highly offensive to the Jews. This change must surely have been taught by the Apostles, or it never could have been adopted (against all the interests of the church) in the age immediately succeeding; and nothing could cause it to be taught and practised by persons so inclined to judaize as were the Christians, except a complete persuasion, not only as to the fact that Christ was risen, but as to the *day* on which he rose. It appears that afterwards, and I think most probably from the beginning, some Christians kept both days. In the larger

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\* See pp. 6-7, above.

or interpolated epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, it is written, "let each of us sabbatize spiritually," &c. "And after having sabbatized, let every lover of Christ keep as a festival the Lord's day—the *rising day* [τὴν ἀναστασιμον], the Queen, the *chief of all the days*," &c.\* So that where both days were observed, the Lord's day had a great pre-eminence given to it, for this express reason, that it was known to be the day when Christ arose.

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\* Patr. Apost. Ed. Cotel. t. ii. p. 57.

† Lar. i. 412.

‡ Euseb. E. H. l. 5. c. 23. p. 190.

§ Ibid. p. 192.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## B.

ON THE THEORIES OF HERETICS CONCERNING  
CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

To that argument for the belief of the first Christians in Christ's resurrection, which is deduced from their belief in the general future resurrection of the body, it may be objected,—that, by some *called* Christians, this latter doctrine was questioned or denied. Celsus refers to such,\* and the writer of the Epistles to the Corinthians had done so before. But these exceptions do not, in my judgment, on the whole, weaken our argument. For even those heretics whose opinions were highly speculative and extravagant, appear to have believed, in some sense, the resurrection of Jesus. Thus even Cerinthus taught (as is stated in the most ancient accounts of heresies, that of Irenæus, and also by Epiphanius) "that Jesus suffered and rose again," though he had a mystical idea that when Jesus suffered, the Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, being impassible, left him.† Apelles, who denied the general resurrection of the body, yet held "that Christ was really crucified, and afterwards showed that very

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\* In Orig. i. v. p. 240. Ed. Spenc.

† Lar. iv. 564-5.

fresh to his disciples."\* The Marcionites also, "must have believed, in some sense, our Lord's resurrection, for they had in their gospel the account of his addressing himself to the apostles after that event."† But the admission of it, with mystical explanations, by even those sects who seem in general to have followed no guide save a lawless fancy, is perhaps a stronger indication of the powerful testimonies to it, than their entire assent would have been. The false or fanciful interpretation of this fact, together with many points of Christian doctrine, by such visionaries as Cerinthus, or Mani, (or its rejection, if it *was* entirely rejected by any,—as Basilides,)‡ can no more disprove its reality, or the belief of it by the sound body of primitive Christians, than the unbelief of Tacitus or Gelsus, or a vast body of Jews and heathens, can do so: but that most of them found it necessary to resort to a phantastic theory concerning the body of Jesus (something like that of Bishop Berkeley concerning *all* bodies), in order to make the facts both of the crucifixion and resurrection agree with their scheme—of what was philosophically or divinely *fit*, evinces, I apprehend, more than their entire concurrence would have done, the general belief and strong attestation of those facts.

If this fact were not most steadily believed by the Christian community, and on the best evidence, why did not these *free thinking* Christians altogether deny it, as plainly as many of them did the future general resurrection? No scruples

\* Epiph. in Lar. iv. 643-4. † Tertul. qu. in Lar. iv. 604.

‡ Lar. iv. 540, 560. Basilides and Carpocrates did not live till considerably after the death of the apostles and their companions. (See Lar. iv. 557 and 534.) Their scepticism, therefore, whatever were its kind or degree, can have no more force than any other scepticism. The opinions of the Neologists or Antisupernaturalists of Germany, would not have been of more real weight, if newly broached in the second century, than as proposed in the eighteenth.

can be supposed to have checked them, by those who know the lengths of their other aberrations. If they had believed in Christ's resurrection exactly as others did, it still could not have been demonstrated that this belief was quite uniform and universal; but their not having done so, gives us the occasion of knowing, that they felt compelled in this point to invent the wildest subtilties in order to accommodate their stubborn notions to the more stubborn fact.

Bonnet has expressed more generally the same view of the subject. "It is true that there were heretics who denied that Christ had a body similar to ours, and who pretended that his death and his resurrection were but *pure appearances*. But this singular imagination proves of itself that these heretics recognised the validity of the testimonies rendered to the resurrection of the founder; since their heresy did not consist in denying this resurrection, but in explaining it by certain appearances.\* [par des *apparences*.] They therefore avowed the fact, and because the incarnation did not accord with the ideas which they had formed to themselves of the person of the founder, they fabricated a system of appearances purposely to reconcile their ideas with the testimonies.†

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\* He means rather to say, by a theory of illusory appearances.

† Recherches sur le Christianisme, p. 300, note n.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## C.

ON THE MIXT CHARACTER ATTRIBUTED BY SOME  
INFIDELS TO THE FIRST WITNESSES.

Let unbelievers take their choice. To use the words of Dr. Price, "Let them show that Christ and his apostles were either enthusiasts or impostors, and account for their conduct and writings on *one* of these suppositions, taking along with them the consideration, how *wild* and *frantic* they must have been if the former, and how *profane* and *abandoned* if the latter."\* But they cannot venture to adopt either supposition distinctly; so that Dr. Hartley appears correct in affirming, "cautious unbelievers find themselves obliged to insinuate *both* in their attacks upon revealed religion; which is in effect to acknowledge, that both the charge of gross enthusiasm, and that of abandoned imposture, are necessary to support their objections. Now, as neither charge, singly taken, can be maintained, so both together are inconsistent. Gross enthusiasm does not admit that constant caution, and cool dispassionate cunning, which abandoned imposture supposes and requires, in order to succeed."† This appears undeniable; and yet such is the patched hypothesis which

\* Dissert. p. 447.

† Obs. on Man. ii. 194, abridged.



an unbeliever cannot afford to let go, especially when he contends that the *resurrection of Christ* did not really happen. The serviceable theory for his purpose, is not even this, that some of the professed eye-witnesses were hardened knaves and others devout madmen, but rather that all of them were madmen and knaves, at once, or by turns, and at their own option : remembering also, that those Protean impostors and lunatics chose and contrived to propagate, at the risk of bonds, and scourges, and death to themselves and others, by the medium of their insane falsehood, a far more rational and pure religion and morality than the world had known. Grant only such a junta,—of spirits or genii, alike wicked and weak, (having the shape of Galileans without the nature of men,) partaking of human hallucination, and of super-human artifice, together or at choice, yet zealous to use both, at the cost of suffering thousands, in order to bring about the overthrow of idolatry and vice, and the moral reformation of the world,—with *such* data, the rise and progress of an imposture like Christianity may be more easily imagined,—explained they will hardly say.

But to that scheme, the Jewish invention of two Messiahs, one suffering, one triumphant, is but a sober fiction. The Jews might as well (it is truly observed by Bishop Kidder)\* “set up a great many as two :” but had they set up *twelve* Messiahs, to solve those prophetic characters and events which we affirm to meet in the life of Jesus, this hypothesis, as it seems to me, would fall short in extravagance, of that which must be compounded,† in order to account

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\* Dem. Mees. vol. i. p. 199.

† It is freely granted, with Bishop Butler (Anal. p. 291), that something of passive delusion and active deceit may be met with together : while human nature is both fallible and sinful, both must in a degree exist in all men ; but this no more makes it credible that the *extremes* of character were ever conjoined, than the

for the conduct and success of the apostles and their companions, if we suppose Christianity a fiction.

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presence of oxygen in combustion, and of that same gas as the chief constituent of water, will make it credible that fire and water have been kept in contact, and unchanged, within the same cup.

## CHAPTER IX.

ON SOME PARTS OF THE PROOF FOR CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.

## SECTION II.

*The absence of counter-evidence.*

It has been argued by the advocates of Christianity, and I think unanswerably, that if the resurrection of Jesus be denied, those who affirmed that they had seen their master after this event are decidedly pronounced impostors: and of such imposture the concealment of the corpse could have been alone the basis.\*

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\* Unless, indeed, such artful and unprotected deceivers could be supposed at the same time so insanelly rash, as to dare assert, falsely, that the body, still possessed or accessible by his enemies, was not his, but had by those enemies been

I hope it has been lately made apparent, that this supposition *must* be "given up." It is, however, that, which those who offered evidence against the resurrection distinctly allege. The other hypothesis—that the professed eye-witnesses were under an *illusion*—is, as we have shown, (to say the very least,) *equally* incredible.<sup>b</sup> But besides this, as being directly *contrary* to the evidence (so called) of the Jews and Roman soldiers, it would be absurd to make it the basis for examining the *truth* of that evidence. The very same persons who denied the resurrection, affirmed the *theft*. If we begin by rejecting their affirmation, what weight shall we attach to their denial? Our present topic requires that we assume, for the moment, *something* else than a real resurrection to have happened: and the above considerations compel us to assume the theft. So that we reason on one of two suppositions, which we have concluded to be alike untenable.<sup>c</sup>

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substituted for it; a falsehood of such matchless effrontery as must have brought on them the immediate vengeance both of Jews and Romans. Besides which, it would be a supposition not merely unsuggested by any of the Jewish accounts, but as directly at *variance* with all of them, as with all probability.

<sup>b</sup> In sect. 1, pp. 20-1.

<sup>c</sup> If the reader thinks this lost labour, he can shun a participation in it by passing to the next section.

If infidels choose to suppose, that the body of Jesus remained suspended and unburied, then it must have been under the *customary* guard of Roman sentinels;<sup>d</sup> if it were buried, which we both conclude from Jewish custom,<sup>e</sup> and learn from Jewish statements,<sup>f</sup> then it was (to say the least) accessible, both to Jewish and Roman authorities. The story of the Jews, in the apostolic age, was, that the disciples, as wilful deceivers, stole the body

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<sup>d</sup> See Pearson on Creed, p. 218.

\* The *Roman* custom was to leave the crucified a prey for devouring birds, with a soldier or soldiers to watch, lest they should be removed; but the Roman jurists write, that governors of provinces could, and usually did, grant the bodies for interment, if desired;<sup>\*</sup> and Josephus tells us that "the Jews" (of his own time) "had so great concern for burials as to take down and bury before sun-set those who were crucified [*ανασταυρῆμεν*] by a legal sentence."<sup>†</sup> The law of Moses strictly enjoined the burial of persons capitally punished (Deut. xxi. 22—23); and we have already seen<sup>‡</sup> that the scrupulous attachment of the Jews to that law, was a national feeling, which the Romans found it indispensable to treat with *great* indulgence and respect.

<sup>f</sup> See the Jewish story here following, as given by Justin Martyr, and in the Gospel of Matthew. The Toldoth and the legend of Agobard also relate, (though with circumstances that contradict each other,) the burial of Jesus.

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\* Pearson on Creed, p. 218, and Lar. i. 69.

† Bell. Jud. l. iv. c. 5, sect. 2, in Lar. *ibid*.

‡ Ch. iv. Suppl. (A.) vol. i. p. 162.

of Jesus. Although unbelievers, preferring their own wish to the testimony of all Christian antiquity, may deem Matthew's Gospel a forgery of the next age: they will not suppose its inventive author so senseless as to write, "this account" (i. e. of the theft of Christ's body) "has been *divulged* by (or among) the Jews *until this day*,"<sup>8</sup> without perceiving, that, if such had not been a current and continued story among that people, this single, and entirely needless clause, could only serve to discredit his whole performance?<sup>1</sup> We have, however, in

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxviii. 15. διαφημισθη ὁ λόγος ὅτι οἱ παρὰ Ἰουδαίους μικροῦ της σημερον.

<sup>1</sup> And this passage not only shows, indirectly, (let the book which contains it be held genuine or otherwise,) what was the Jewish account of the matter in a general way, but it seems to imply the circumstance of the "watch;" for that appears involved in the "account divulged," one part of which is, "they stole him *while we slept*."<sup>2</sup> If a reference to the Roman guard and their excuse had formed no part of the Jewish account, the writer or fabricator of the passage would have brought a strong suspicion on his own accuracy. It may be thought strange that this should not have been suppressed in the Jewish story, since it might induce reflections adverse to its credibility. But the fact that a watch or guard had been set might be notorious in the Roman army; and besides this, how perpetually do we find the inventors of falsehoods forgetting, at one or more points, to maintain consistency.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 13.

addition to this, the direct appeal of Justin Martyr to the Jews, as to the story officially circulated by the Sanhedrim; it is contained in his disputation with the Jew Trypho, which, of course, was specially designed for the perusal of that people, and could not possibly appeal to them, in such a matter, except on the ground of its publicity.<sup>1</sup>

Such being, then, the Jewish account, it follows that, if the authors and agents of Christ's death believed this theft to have occurred, their instant and earnest aim, when the story of his resurrection arose, would be to compel the production of the

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<sup>1</sup> The passage has been partly cited above, (Ch. ii. Supplement (A.)) but the whole is as follows:—"You not only did not repent, when you learnt that he had risen from the dead, but, as I said before, having appointed select men, you sent into all the world, proclaiming that a certain godless and lawless heresy has arisen from Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom, when we (or ye) had crucified, his disciples having *stolen him from the tomb* by night, where he had been laid when detached from the cross, deceive men, saying that he has risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven." In the place to which Justin refers, (a former passage of his dialogue, p. 170,) he has mentioned these envoys from Jerusalem and their object in a more general way; but he there says boldly to the Jews, "ye sent them when ye *knew* that he was risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven."

It may startle some Christian readers, that men *knowing*

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\* Dial. Edit. Thirlb. p. 368.

body. It is not to be believed that, even if Pilate was supine and indifferent, the *Jewish* authorities would have been so, or would have hesitated to exercise every rigour, for this purpose, against the disciples, and especially against those who professed to have seen Jesus risen. Nor could the fraudulent removal and concealment of the body have taken place without concert. Nay, admitting that appointment of a guard, which appears to have been related by the Jews themselves,<sup>k</sup> it must have been a robbery, not effected without joint contrivance and joint force.<sup>l</sup> But even if this account

these solemn facts could commission others to deny them; but those must have been men of deeply hardened hearts who could affirm what Justin charges them with in the next sentence; that the disciples "taught things godless, lawless, and unholy." [*αθεῖα, καὶ ἀνομία, καὶ ἀνὸςια.*] Even if they could have made them suspected as impostors, they could not have proved them *teachers* of evil while the New Testament exists.

<sup>k</sup> See p. 39, above, note h.

<sup>l</sup> "Can it be supposed that Roman soldiers, trained up under the strictest discipline, should be all asleep at the same time, and sleep so soundly and so long as not to be awakened, by the carrying off the body?"\* Yet those who should deny, or doubt, that any guard was placed at the sepulchre of Jesus, would "take from the pretended theft the only posi-

\* West on Resurrection, p. 139, abridged.



were doubted of,<sup>m</sup> and it were deemed possible that a very few persons might so secrete the body as to baffle all research; yet, on the supposition which we are now making—that the rulers believed a theft had been committed—all the professed *eye-witnesses* of the resurrection must have been rightly viewed by them as gross and blasphemous impostors. No severities could have been scrupled at to extort from each a disavowal of that false testimony; and such recantations would have given to the supposition of theft a strength and probability

tive evidence" (such as it is), "that was ever brought to support it."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>m</sup> It would, however, be unreasonable to doubt the *fact*, even were the story doubted; for it well deserves our attention, that nothing is *less* likely in itself than the *omission* of a "watch" or "guard" in this particular case. A resurrection, as even the Jewish legends agree to tell us,<sup>†</sup> had been "*promised*" or "*predicted*." Since it was usual to set a military watch over the corpses of the crucified to prevent burial by friends, (see Plutarch in Vit. Cleom. Edit. Wrangham, vol. vi. 185, and note,) how indispensable must it have been felt by the Jews to solicit, and by the procurator to grant, a watch at the tomb in *this* case, where the party was known to have zealous adherents, who might withdraw it.

<sup>a</sup> West on Resurrection, p. 369.

<sup>†</sup> See Told. Wagens. p. 19, and Agobard in Supplement to this section.

that would have quite exploded the Christian story. And who can suppose, that among a number of *false* witnesses, there would have been no such recantations? "Who can doubt," (inquires Abbadie,) "that if Jesus, when living, had been betrayed, Jesus, when dead, would much more be so?" "From Jesus living, something, perhaps, might be hoped; but from Jesus deceased, nothing but hardship and punishment, with the shame and remorse of having upholden a deceiver."<sup>n</sup> There might have been some support for the allegation of theft, if but two or three professed eye-witnesses of Christ's resurrection had retracted; for this might have fatally shaken the credit of *that* fact: and then the theft would have been circumstantially indicated by the *absence* of the body; though not so clearly proved as by its discovery.\*

But we remark, further, whether the Jewish rulers believed in such a fraud, or whether they only affected to believe it, (resolving thus to get rid of an alleged miracle which they choose to *dis-*

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<sup>n</sup> Rel. Chret. II. 225—6.

\* And yet the resurrection might have really happened, for what would such retractions have proved, except that some individuals, feeble women perhaps, were terrified into them by the threat of grievous sufferings? But the event, though real, would not have been so uncontradicted, as the providence of God designed it should be.

believe,) what should have prevented them from procuring the production of *some* body, which might pass for that of the crucified? Not surely a conscientious hesitation; for, without saying any thing of the character of those priests and counselors,<sup>p</sup> we may conclude that, if they *believed* that a pernicious fraud had been committed, they would have deemed that to be a pious counter-fraud which would disabuse the people; and, if they only *affected* to believe this, it required little more baseness to contrive false proof of it than to propagate the false accusation.

The policy of producing the body, or pretending to do so, as a decisive check to the story of a resurrection and to the growth of the sect, is so perfectly obvious, that the writers of the Toldoth<sup>q</sup> affirm that it *was* produced. Nor does our firm belief in the reality of our Lord's resurrection preclude our admitting such a device to have been practicable, and in some respects even probable. It is not, indeed, at all the more probable, because affirmed by those compilers of virulent fictions, who are never to be credited, except when they touch common

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<sup>p</sup> Its exceeding wickedness is described by Josephus, &c. See the citations in Horne's Introd. iii. 387, and above, vol. i. p. 128, note.

<sup>q</sup> As quoted in B. pr. pp. 129—133, and see Basn. H. des J. liv. iv. c. 28, sect. 11. tom. iii. 440.

facts incidentally, or when they make reluctant concessions;<sup>r</sup> nor is it in the *least* worthy of belief; inasmuch as all their earlier histories are quite silent on it; and another of their legends directly

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<sup>r</sup> Such, therefore, are the only kinds of occasions on which we have used, or shall use their authority.—Nothing can be clearer than that the admissions of a fabulous and unprincipled writer may *then* be received, when the facts admitted make strongly *for* that cause which it is the sole object of his malignant fictions to defame; because he can be induced or compelled to these concessions only by the force of notoriety: and it is equally plain, that his statements of the *opposite* sort are not a whit the more admissible or worthy of credit on this account. For example, the compiler of the Toldoth Jeschu states that Jesus was born at Bethlehem; a material fact, in support not only of the gospel histories, but of the Christian proof from prophecy *independently* of them. Nothing surely, therefore, could have induced a bitter foe of Christianity to admit and record it, except that it had been always matter of notoriety. It happens in this instance that we learn its notoriety from a different quarter; for Origen writes, “the cave is shown in Bethlehem, where he was born,” &c. adding, “and this which is shewn is famed [*διαβουτον*] in those places, even among such as are aliens from the faith; who tell how in that cave Jesus, he that is adored and admired by the Christians, was born.”\* The compiler of the Toldoth could not evade or deny so public a fact; neither could he, (as we shall afterwards see,) the wonderful works of Jesus. These things he concedes, because he *must*;

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\* Orig. Cont. Cels. lib. i, p. 39.

contradicts it.<sup>s</sup> But, *had* the attempt been made, (which certainly would have been easy,) to exhibit a dead body as that of Jesus, or should any one, on the faith of the Toldoth think it was; the success of the Christian cause, *after* this, would but show the more strongly, how great must have been the notoriety of the resurrection and its attendant miracles, or how firm and numerous its attestations, inasmuch as the belief of it survived and was rapidly propagated on the spot, notwithstanding *this*, and all other modes of disproof.

Further, it may be observed, that, had the real body of Jesus been produced and exhibited for inspection, this must have given a stunning, irrecoverable blow to Christianity, at once; on the other hand, had a supposititious body been produced, and this deceit been found at all effectual in check-

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and we therefore then strongly believe him, without at all thanking him; but he is no more to be credited or listened to, on this or any other account, when he pretends that Judas secreted the body of Jesus, or that it was discovered, than when he relates that this Judas having stolen the ineffable name, "was carried up by a whirlwind between heaven and earth," &c.;\* and that "the crosses of wood broke, because Jesus had enchanted them."†

\* See Supplement to this section.

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\* In Told. Wagens. p. 13, quoted B. pr. pp. 125—6.

† Ib. p. 18. quoted ib. p. 127.

ing the growth of the religion, or producing secessions, the next and most obvious business of its contrivers would surely have been to preserve and guard with public care, that by the disappearance of which a heresy had been revived, and by the reproduction of which it had been repressed. Even an affectation, or studied display of this vigilant care would have been politic, as corroborating the belief of that previous theft, which had been the alleged basis of the Christian falsehood. If infidels could imagine that there was, as the Toldoth pretends, a recovery and production of the *real* body, then this care to preserve it, and so to perpetuate or prolong the signal and palpable refutation of the Nazarenes; could not be conceived to be the less, but even the more; and accompanied with greater triumph. To retain, so as that it might be accessible to public view, or to reserve for occasional exhibition, this relic or trophy (this standing memorial, whether genuine or spurious) of victory over one whom they had punished as “a seducer,” and an “enemy to the law,” but whose deceits his followers had attempted, not without some success, to revive even after his death, by larceny and fiction, was a precaution so plain and so important for the hierarchy, that it could not have been neglected. No one who has learnt from their own historian the character of the leading

Jews at that period, can suppose, that even if the body of Jesus could not be discovered (from whatever cause) they would have omitted, either from scruples of conscience, or from want of boldness or of cunning, to produce a corpse which might be imposed on the nation for his, and to preserve it as such.<sup>t</sup> A relic which might be “seen, and touched, and handled,” attested by the weight of their revered authority, would surely have been the most direct, simple, and effective argument that the followers of Jesus were liars and cheats. Yet if the Jewish rulers *had* done thus, is it

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<sup>t</sup> If it be objected, relics are *honoured* objects, in some way connected with those whom their possessors *venerate* ; and it is more customary to destroy than to preserve the remains of those who are execrated ; I answer, it is usual also to preserve the standards of foes as trophies of victory, and sometimes other objects as memorials of the designs and enterprises of enemies :—not to go for instances out of the Jewish history, the sword of the vanquished Goliath was laid up in the tabernacle. But in the case of Jesus, that far mightier opponent,—whom they professed to have vanquished, and whom his disciples affirmed to have vanquished both death and them, the only appropriate and convincing trophy was the corpse of him whom they “affirmed to be alive.”—Had the Philistines feigned that their champion was risen again, and would soon renew his challenge, the only valuable trophy for Israel, by which to silence these boasters, would have been not the gigantic armour, but the gigantic

credible that both Jew and heathen of those ages, would have been silent about it? that it would have formed no part of the story told by their own "chosen men,"—that it would not have been named by Josephus, who must have *seen* the supposed remains,<sup>u</sup>—that Tacitus would not have deigned to record in three words this standing mark of Christian stupidity—that the Talmuds

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*head or arm.*—If it would have seemed a desecration of solemn usages, to give to the remains of one who had died ignominiously that permanence by embalming,\* which they gave to those of the great and honourable,—or if other circumstances of their real or pretended discovery were supposed to prevent this,—there might still have been a preservation of the *durable* remains.

<sup>u</sup> Or were it thought possible that the corpse was publicly produced, yet *not* preserved, who can believe that Josephus would not have related *that* simple and palpable overthrow of the Christian delusion; which must have been fresh in the memory of thousands—of very many with whom he had *conversed* in Jerusalem;—and which he had strong and various motives to state?

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\* Archdeacon Wrangham, in his notes to Plutarch's account of the crucifixion of Cleomenes, (after death) by order of Ptolemy, mentions that "Amyot," (the French translator of Plutarch,) "represents it as somewhere stated that he even ordered him to be embalmed,"\* with a view to the permanent exposure or exhibition of the body. I have no means (at present,) to know whether Amyot cites his authority.

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\* Lives, vol. vi. 184.



and the Rabbis would have dropped no hint of it,<sup>†</sup>—that tradition would not have carried it to the ear of Celsus, and of Julian, who were specially conversant with Jews and Jewish legends, —or that it would then not have been made *use* of by any of these adversaries, and especially by the last? How aptly would it have enhanced his scornful reproach against the gentile Christians for “going over to the dead man of the Jews,” if he could have added, with the slightest support from any Jewish or heathen tradition,—whose corpse or whose skeleton was publicly preserved, and was seen by Roman governors and officers, in successive reigns, though lost or burnt afterwards in the destruction of the city.

The total silence of all history and tradition as to so natural, important, and easy an expedient for discomfiting the Christian faith,—that of preserving the tangible monument (real or pretended) of its groundlessness and folly,—is, as it appears to me, a full proof, that this expedient *was* not, because it *could* not be, adopted; that, at the *first*, and on the *spot*, it was vain to *attempt* any refutation: that

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<sup>†</sup> Not only is the *preservation* of the corpse nowhere affirmed by the Jewish legendary and controversial writers, but one of their traditions expressly relates that it never *could* be found. See Supplement to this section.

the resurrection and ascension of Christ were too numerous and strongly vouched for, and the wonders which preceded and followed these events too notorious, for a pretence of exhibiting the body to have brought any thing but contempt on its contrivers. It was better, if so, to act as they seem to have acted;<sup>w</sup> to disseminate, by their messengers, in foreign lands, the rumour of theft and imposture, since few or none could there have so distinctly known the contrary proofs;<sup>x</sup> but not

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<sup>w</sup> That is to say,—a better scheme of worldly policy, on the part of men who were determined to shut their eyes against the light of a disturbing truth. “Why”—(asks Mr. Abbadie, in the person of an objector) “were there so many people, even at that time, who would not believe the ascension of Jesus? The reason” (he answers) “is not very difficult to find: it was this; that the truth of this event once averred, might oblige them to encounter martyrdom; and that men were worldly then, just as they are now.” *Rel. Chret. t. ii. pp. 233-4.*

<sup>x</sup> If it be asked,—since this could not be done at home, what importance would there be in doing it abroad? I would answer,—it might be hoped that the impression at home would be transient; and besides, the denial of Christ’s resurrection (as far as such awkward fictions could procure it) was desirable for the vindication of themselves, in having rancorously compassed and urged his death, if not of the Roman procurator for consenting to be their instrument in its infliction. The event, wherever credited, must have indicated the sufferer’s glory, and denounced shame on his relentless persecutors.

to insist on or follow up these charges in Jerusalem and Judæa: rather, when pressed with the various testimony of the resurrection and ascension, to suggest or insinuate the great power of sorcery or necromancy, and the possibility that, if no theft had taken place, the deceiver had, by the aid of demons, either escaped actual death, or been raised to seeming life.<sup>7</sup> Such vague pretexts and conjectures we can conceive to have satisfied many of those who invented and adduced them, and more to whom they were adduced, and to whose prejudices and wishes they were equally welcome. But then they could not at all satisfy serious and sincere inquirers; whereas, the production of the body,—nay, the artifice of producing and preserving a supposititious body, if “cunningly devised” and executed, and *not* overborne by *strong* contrary evidences,—or the detection of notable inconsistencies between the professed witnesses—or the occurrence of many recantations among them, (which would be presumptions of fraud, though it were undiscovered,) must surely have kept back or reclaimed all persons not insane, and destroyed the sect in its cradle. But, it is certain, that the religion was *not* so destroyed on the spot where it arose.

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<sup>7</sup> See Supplement to this section.

On the contrary, the check to it was of very short duration.<sup>a</sup> Therefore, these disproofs were neither found nor contrived: not surely for want of will, or power, or cunning; but, because they *could* not be brought against overbearing testimonies, and proofs of notoriety, with any chance of effect; in other words, because the resurrection and ascension of Jesus had really and undeniably happened.

In the former section, it was shown, from various considerations, how fully the Christians of the apostolic age *believed* the resurrection of Jesus,<sup>aa</sup> and how indubitably this belief was, in a multitude of cases, grounded on the direct testimony of the professed eye-witnesses, (both the witnesses and the believers being likewise sufferers for it, or constantly liable to suffer,) and was, moreover, preceded or accompanied, in very many instances, by inquiry among those, and in the very scene of the event believed.<sup>bb</sup> We argued, also, that these professed eye-witnesses were not few; and that they could neither be imposed on, nor be impostors.<sup>cc</sup>

<sup>a</sup> "Repressa in præsens, rursus erumpebat;—per Judæam." Tacit. Ann. xv. 44. See this and other authorities in chap. viii. above.—Vol. i. pp. 345—6.

<sup>aa</sup> Sect. 1, pp. 3—9.

<sup>bb</sup> Ibid. pp. 9—18.

<sup>cc</sup> Ibid. pp. 18—25.

The proof, I trust, was then found to be strong and satisfactory ;—we have since examined whether there be any contrary proofs of weight to subvert or weaken it ; and if there were such, what must have been their nature. It has appeared that the most easy and conclusive would have been, the continued exhibition of the body which was affirmed to be risen, or even of some body which might be *supposed* to be that same ;—next to this, the extortion of a public confession of falsehood from professed eye-witnesses of Christ's reappearing ; which would have gone far to confirm a suspicion of theft, even though the body had *not* been produced, nor the management of that part of the imposture any way elicited.<sup>dd</sup> In fact, there could be *no other* sort of counter-proofs than these ; nothing, therefore, more obvious or more necessary, than to seek, and to record, and to reiterate these. But they have been no where even adverted to. The plain inference is, that they were not obtained ; or that,

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<sup>dd</sup> It has been already observed, that partial recantations could not decisively prove the theft, nor disprove the resurrection ; for there is less weight surely in the evidence of people who yield to threats or sufferings, than in that of those who are unmoved by both. But it would have gone far with the prejudiced ; and whom, after the execution of Jesus, can we conceive to have been *unprejudiced* ! Had there been such recantations, would the Jews and the heathens have forgotten to appeal to them ?

if subornation and a false production of the body of Jesus were for the *instant* thought of or attempted, they were given up in despair;<sup>66</sup> on account of the overwhelming strength of the Christian testimony, with its collateral and subsequent supports, which we shall notice hereafter. The only shadow of counter-evidence extant, is the vague assertion of the Jewish emissaries in foreign countries; which amounts to this;<sup>67</sup>—Jesus was a “Galilean deceiver;” his body disappeared after his crucifixion and burial; *therefore*, his disciples stole it:—a very convenient, and, as some might think, the only *possible* solution of its disappearance.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> That would be very natural language for this occasion, which, in the book of Acts, (iv. 16), is attributed to the Sanhedrim, in connexion with a subsequent occurrence;—“a known undoubted miracle [γνωστον σημειον] has taken place, and we cannot deny it.”

<sup>67</sup> Abbadie terms these persons, (in irony no doubt,) the “witnesses of the synagogue.” They should rather be termed the *tale-bearers*. He is quite sensible that this was their true character, for he pointedly observes “they attest that which they do not know, that which they have not seen, and of which they can have no knowledge, for what faith can be given to the report of the “watch?” If they saw the body of Jesus in the act of being removed, why did they not *prevent* this act? If they did *not* see it, what is the force of their testimony?” Rel. Chret. t. ii. pp. 153—4.

<sup>68</sup> Confirmed Sadducees and Epicureans would *certainly* be of this opinion, and perhaps some other philosophic sects.

As to the depositions of the Roman soldiers, these (if we suppose them actually made,) destroy their own credibility. They depose to what happened while they slept.—There is then, absolutely, nothing worth the name of counter-evidence, real or pretended.

## SUPPLEMENT.

ON THE JEWISH PRETENCES CONCERNING CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.

There were legends and oral traditions anciently current among that people, which it is well to produce, as affording specimens of Jewish subterfuge, and also as quite contradicting the fictions of their own Toldoth concerning the production of the body of Jesus. Agobard, Bishop of Lyons, in his tract on the Jewish superstitions, already quoted,\* relates, "They read in the teachings of their *forefathers*, that Jesus, being buried near an aqueduct, and committed to the guard of a certain Jew, but carried away in the night by a sudden inundation of the aqueduct, had, by the command of Pilate, been sought for twelve moons, but *never found*. That Pilate then published to them a law as follows :—it is manifest that he has risen as he had *promised*, who was killed by you through envy, and is not found in the tomb or in any other place ; and for this reason I command that you adore him, which whoso is unwilling to do, let him know that his portion shall be in hell." "All these things," (adds Agobard,) "their *elders have feigned*, and they themselves with a stupid obstinacy read [lectitant] that by such stories all the truth of Christ's virtue and passion may be annulled, and it may

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\* Ch. ii. Supplement (A.) vol. i. p. 82.



appear that adoration ought not to be rendered to him as truly God, but was only procured for him by Pilate's law."\*

This history was better suited for Gaul than for Palestine; but it is curious in several respects;—as disagreeing with the *anachronisms* of the Jews, yet agreeing with the uniform ascription of Christ's death to *themselves*;—as having some obscure affinity to Tertullian's account of the convictions and conduct of Pilate,† and consequent proposal of Tiberius;—as flatly denying one fiction of the Toldoth, by recording that the body of Jesus "*was never found*," though very long sought for; an admission which seems to betray the embarrassment produced by a well known and mysterious fact;—and lastly, as endeavouring to account for the success of Christianity by an error or delusion of Pilate.

But there was also adopted by Jews in the first ages, a different solution of the alleged fact, which concedes in some sort its *actual occurrence*;—and this reaches us in a manner so indirect, as to make it peculiarly worthy of attention. We find among the genuine "*acts of martyrs*," an interesting record of the martyrdom of Pionius at Smyrna. Its genuineness is unquestioned, but it has been controverted whether the martyrdom took place in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, or in the persecution under Decius. The learned Bishop Pearson, among others, ascribes it to the earlier period. These acts contain a discourse by Pionius to the "*lapsed*," in which he says, "I hear that the Jews are inviting some of you to the synagogue." Then, after relating several Jewish reproaches of Christ's sufferings, &c. he goes on—"They add to their crime, and their blasphemy while they utter it augments. They say that the Lord Jesus

\* Agob. Opp. 1661, p. 76, partly quoted in B. pr. pp. 145—6.

† "*Pilatus, et ipse jam pro sua conscientia Christianus*," &c. See above, vol. i. p. 88. See also Euseb. E. H. lib. ii. c. 2, quoted below, ch. xii. sect. ii.

Christ with his cross returned to life (or to the upper regions,) by the practice of evoking ghosts." [Dicunt D. J. Christum cum cruce ad superos facta umbrarum excitatione remeasse.] He then adds, "I will now rehearse what the Jews often advanced when I was quite a youth," and proceeds to relate their reference to the calling up of Samuel by the "Pythoness" of Endor, in support of their pretence. This, the martyr contends, was a demoniacal illusion, (whether his comment on it be right, is nothing to our present purpose,) and concludes, "if, therefore, it was not possible that any one should call up the soul of the prophet, how can it be believed that the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the disciples saw taken up into heaven, which rather than deny, they suffered death with cheerfulness, was raised by incantations from the earth and from the tomb?" [De terra et de sepulcro carminibus excitatum.]\*

In the "Acta Sanctorum" of Bollandus, another record of the "Acts of Pionius" is given from the works of Simeon Metaphrastes. The address to the "lapsed" is there substantially the same, but in different language. Speaking to them of the Jews, the martyr says, "They know not that he (Christ,) was only in *such* a sense mortal, as that he by his own will gave up the ghost. They say besides that Christ exercised necromancy, and by its force was raised up after crucifixion." [Dicunt præterea Christum necromantiam exercuisse, ejusque vi post crucem fuisse suscitatum.]+ Are not those who feign tales of this sort flagitious men? I, indeed, when I was yet a boy, [cum adhuc essem puer,] heard this figment of the Jews," &c. He then goes on to refer to their pretence about Samuel, and to argue against it, concluding, "how then dare they to affirm that Jesus Christ, (whom his disciples saw ascending into the heavens, and for

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\* Ruinart. Act. Mart. sinc. et sel. pp. 146—7.

† This is quoted B. pr. p. 170, but without context.

whom they chose to die rather than deny him,) arose in *this* manner from the earth?"\*

These accounts of the words of Pionius differ no more than might be expected from two reporters; and I think no one can read those Acts without a persuasion that they were reported by some ear-witnesses. It appears, therefore, certain that the Jews of that age, or *some* of them, were driven to *this* kind of concession. We may infer that the martyr had heard this "figment" forty or fifty years before; for though we are not told his age when he suffered, we may collect that he was old from this expression, when his person is described; "his beard and hair, &c. were such that he might have been believed a youth." If therefore we follow those who judge him to have suffered under Decius, A. D. 250, we ascertain that this evasion was resorted to by Jews at the end of the second century. If those who associate him in martyrdom with Polycarp, (A. D. 167,) then we trace it back to the beginning of that age. But at whichever period the martyr suffered, there is no reason to doubt that the pretext which he had heard "when a boy" was of much older date. We may add this to the concessions of the wildest heretics; (see pp. 31-2, above) it has a kind of force not dissimilar. How painfully does it also illustrate our Lord's predictive declaration, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

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\* Bolland. tom. i. Februar. Act. Pion. ex S. M. cap. iii. p. 45.

## CHAPTER IX.

ON SOME PARTS OF THE PROOF OF CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.

## SECTION III.

*This particular fact indispensable to the subsistence of the religion, and even to genuine theism.*

EXCEPT there were some great fallacies in the arguments of two former sections, the testimony for Christ's resurrection is ample, and the counter-evidence *none*. If there be those who, while they cannot detect, or fairly presume such fallacies, yet continue to disbelieve the event, or yield to secret doubts of its reality, they should be aware that this is not for want of proof, nor on account of contrary testimony ; but chiefly, if not merely, because

the fact is *miraculous*.<sup>\*</sup> But it has throughout these volumes been assumed, that the reader does not atheistically deny the possibility of miracles, nor even their probability, should an adequate occasion call for them; and we have also, in former chapters, contended,—that Christianity could not have risen, and subsisted, and triumphed, as it did, without *some* miracle;—to say the very least.

Here, then, is the one grand and special miracle, believed and alleged from the first, and never controverted by evidence;—viz., the Resurrection of the Founder. Since we admit, (unless those former reasonings were deemed inconclusive,) that there was *some* miracle, either open or secret,—would it be reasonable to reject or doubt this one, which is ~~so~~ fully attested, and substitute some other of our own imagining, unrecorded and conjectural? An ancient lock is to be opened; we find an ancient key which perfectly *fits* it, and the label or inscription, and the whole fabric, agree to testify that it is the true key; are we to throw it away, as a forged one, and try to manufacture some picklock for ourselves, to

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<sup>\*</sup> I know of only three grounds for disbelief or doubt concerning an alleged fact; viz.—that it is not sufficiently proved—that it is in a measure *disproved*—or that it is such as *cannot* be proved, because impossible in itself.

prove, at once, our distrust of old and vulgar notions, and our great ingenuity?

But even could we grant this to be at all a *reasonable wish*, it would not follow that it is a feasible undertaking. On the contrary, I believe, we may safely affirm, as has been already suggested,<sup>b</sup> that not only *some* miracle, but *this* miracle, this very fact of the founder's resurrection, was a *sine quâ non* to the primitive triumphs of Christianity. Not that I think it would have sufficed of itself to produce them: which is quite a different position;<sup>c</sup> but that *without* it, they could not have taken place. Any other individual miracle, or even *many* others, we can easily conceive might have been omitted without *ruinous* detriment to the cause; but this is indispensable, as the only basis or seal of credibility, to all which came before or after. For if any one should admit, that Jesus, in his lifetime, wrought miracles, (real or seeming,)<sup>d</sup> and that his apostles, after his crucifixion, did the like, and yet deny

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<sup>b</sup> Sec. i. p. 2, above.

<sup>c</sup> The contrary opinion has been already intimated at the commencement of this chapter (sec. i. p. 2), where a "series of miracles" is mentioned; and it will be developed in the sequel.

<sup>d</sup> Which we shall find to have been the case of Celsus, Julian, &c. and of the early Jews.

that there was any satisfactory proof of his having been raised from the dead, I do not see how such a person could either receive the religion as divine, (which indeed it is perfectly improbable he would be disposed to do,) or give any rational account of the grounds on which it *was* so received at first.—If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he suffered the unrefuted condemnation of a seducer; his character was utterly unredeemed, and all his wonderful works, which could then be only historically reported, must have passed either for false rumours or wonderful frauds. For the same reason, all the alleged miracles of his followers must have borne a similar stigma. It would have been surely enough to bar all trust *in* them, and preclude all conviction *from* them, if the infidel could refer to their master's crucified remains, and predict the same ultimate disproof of *their* enchantments. If even that chief of miracles could be ascribed by some to "necromancy,"<sup>c</sup> how

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\* See Supplement to last section. We shall not be inclined to doubt that it might be so explained, even by Jews, if we read the opinions of their renowned doctors, Maimonides and Albo, concerning the greatest miracles of the Old Testament which they assert were not wrought as proofs, and that they may be suspected to have been wrought "by magic," or by the "influence of the stars or pythonism." Quoted in Stilling. Or. Sac. ii. c. 6. p. 202.

much more would the want of that, or the defect of testimony for it, have made all the *rest* to be so regarded? And, on the other hand, if any one should more wildly argue, that there were not only no outward miracles, but not even any real pretensions to them; (viewing the accounts of such as the fictions of a later age,) and should attempt to explain the rapid spread of Christianity among Jews and pagans, and throughout all lands, *merely* by some new and secret operation on men's minds, some unprecedented infusion or contagion of groundless faith and feeling, a sufficiently "strong delusion" to overcome all prepossessions, and face all trials,—I would ask of such a theorist, does he account this inward, and multitudinous, and victorious illusion itself, a miracle, or not?† If he do

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† It should rather be termed a *series* of moral miracles, extended through many and dissimilar communities: or, if we term this but *one* such miracle, we should perhaps adopt the phrase of Dante, "If the world went over to Christianity without miracles, this *one* is such, that the others," (i. e. the alleged physical miracles) "would not be the hundredth part so wonderful."\* And in order to choose between these, "let

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\* *Se'l mondo si rivolse al Cristianesimo,  
Diss'io, senza miracoli, quest'uno  
E tal', che gli altri non sono'l centesimo.\**

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\* Paradiso, Canto xxiv.



not, I have no debate with him ; for it appears to me, that he needs not reckon *any* thing a miracle ; that he does not realize any rule or *ruler* of human affairs ; and that the resurrection of Christ itself might, therefore, be more *consistently* suspected by him to have happened as a product of chance, than it was by the rabbis as an effect of necromancy or pythonism.<sup>s</sup>

If he *do* (on the contrary,) think, that this mul-

us inquire whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, the course of providence, &c. to allow that God imparted to certain select persons of eminent piety, the power of working miracles ; or to suppose that he confounded the understandings, affections, and whole train of associations of thousands, in such a manner that men who in all other things seemed to have acted like other men, should in respect of the history of Christ, and his apostles, abandon all established rules of thinking and acting, and conduct themselves in a way miraculously repugnant to all our ideas and all our experience.”\*

\* Yet he, who, (in a more emphatical and stricter sense than the idolatrous heathen,) is—*αθεος εν τω κοσμῳ*, “godless in the world,”—who submits, nay consents, perhaps with levity, for himself and all his fellow beings, to be the sport of necessity or hazard, in a fatherless universe,—he is the unhappy person for whom, above all others, miracles are needed ; to attest the invaluable doctrine that there is a governor and father of creation “exercising loving kindness and righteousness.” “No properer cure” (it is well observed

\* Dr. Gregory's Letters on Christ. Religion, vol. i. p. 196, abridged.

tiplied illusion among all tribes and nations *was* miraculous, then I would inquire, *was* its origin demoniacal, or divine?—*was* it wrought by evil spirits, or by that Being who is the source of truth? No one, I suppose, can, for an instant, admit the former, who considers what was the nature of the systems it subverted, and what was its own moral tendency. And if supposed divine, the implication, while it becomes blasphemous, is not less monstrous; namely, that the Being, in whom truth is an essential perfection, propagated the most solemn

by Dr. Farmer) “could be prescribed, either for *atheism*, or idolatry, than miracles.”

Not that one has any hope of conviction for atheistical minds, until they be *softened*. The name *esprit fort*, as applied to them, appears to me a misnomer. Is it not more applicable to the martyr Sabina, who smiled while her brother was mildly arguing with his brutal persecutors; and when the throng exclaimed with menacing and terrible clamours—“Dost thou smile?”—replied, “I smile,—if God will,—because we are Christians.”\*

The temper of resolved and reckless infidels, claims for them rather the title, *esprit dur*. It is only when that “adamantine”† spirit becomes (not weak, but) *impressible*,—that it can feel the deep and real *wants* of a rational and moral nature.‡

\* Ruinart Act. sinc. p. 143.

† A phrase of Lucian, quoted ch. xi. sect. 3, below.

‡ See an interesting essay on the causes of unbelief, in Eclect. Rev. 1816, vol. v. N. S. pp. 183—197, Art. Gibbon’s works.

inculcations of that, and every other virtue, by the medium of a pious or benevolent fraud; himself "doing evil that good might come," influencing mankind to believe a lie, that they might thereby become strictly virtuous, and endure the loss of all things for the sake of truth.

But further, (which is the point I would now urge,) it is the denial of *Christ's resurrection*, as included, of course, in such a profane hypothesis, which puts on it its especial and crowning deformity. For then, the Almighty Being, who, by this frightful supposition, imposed beneficently a gross deceit on the minds and hearts of multitudes, would have given, at the same time, by the infamous unreversed doom of its chief agent, strong pleadable proof to its rejecters that it *was* a gross deceit; and, as if to enhance the miracle of delusion wrought on the first converts, would have caused the founder to suffer, without vindication, the deepest ignominy of an impostor, and the followers to trust and adore him notwithstanding. It is blasphemous to suppose, (in a general manner,) that the God of truth would propagate virtue among his creatures by a miraculous deceit; but it is doubly so to suppose *this* feature in the divine deceit, that its chief human instrument was ordained to incur the lowest infamy of cruel penalties, thus giving the most powerful argument for its being a base

delusion to all who were not deluded, and *justifying* their rejection of that *holy* faith which yet was to be introduced at the awful cost of the *divine veracity*!

Thus it appears that no unbelieving explanation of the rise of Christianity could, by professed theists,<sup>b</sup> be adduced,—however irreverent and incredible,—which would not derive from the implied denial of this *particular* fact,—the resurrection of Christ,—its *especial* and *paramount* claim to be so designated. They could offer no solution so subtle or so bold, which would not, on being examined, call for this fact to sustain it; and which would not, by the supposed falsehood of this, acquire a *peculiar* incredibility. If it be so, then the resurrection is, as we have affirmed, a *sine quâ non* in the history of the religion; an event indispensable to the existence of other known events; and, we may add, to the previous proofs that it *did* happen,

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<sup>b</sup> It is scarcely to be expected that any who disclaim theism, should look into these pages. But indeed with such persons I see no reason to hope that abler arguments would produce even *intellectual* persuasion; since I know not, (as was just now intimated) that he who views the world as uncaused, or even as *ungoverned*, can account any thing to be a miracle, either moral or physical, any thing in fact to be more wonderful than another, or can ascribe any solidity to the first principles of reasoning, or the distinctions of right and wrong.

the persuasion (even were these proofs less satisfying than they are,) that it *cannot but* have happened.

We have not, as the reader must be aware, and as the title of this chapter intimates, adverted to the whole proof for our Lord's resurrection, nor indeed to all which this volume will afford.<sup>1</sup> But I would hope, although its proof is here adduced but in part, that its reality would be, even thus, sufficiently evinced to forbid its rejection, by any who can at all appreciate the solemn interests and invaluable hopes suspended upon it.<sup>2</sup> When the event is regarded as vindicating from judicial infamy the sole example of complete and unsullied virtue—as fixing in unnumbered minds the firm assurance of that holy and perfect government, which brings infinite good out of the darkest evil—

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<sup>1</sup> See Supplement to this section.

<sup>2</sup> “The great purpose” (rather, *one* great purpose) “of God, in establishing the order of nature, is to form and advance the mind; and if the case should occur in which the interests of the mind could best be advanced by departing from this order, or by miraculous agency, then the great purpose of the creation, the great end of its laws and regularity, would demand such departure; and miracles, instead of warring against, would concur with nature.”\*

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\* Channing's Discourse on the Evidences, p. 15.

as the strong pledge of immortality and happiness to our suffering race—as the seal of inestimable pardon, and the earnest of all heavenly gifts—who, that perceives the grandeur, or feels the preciousness of these blessings, will not say—the miracle which ratifies them *demand*s “all acceptation;” it is worthy of the author of good, in a degree which his omniscience only can compute; it is as credible as the wants of man are profound, and as the beneficence of the Deity is sure.

## SUPPLEMENT.

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ON SOME ADDITIONAL PROOFS OF CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION.

The plan and purposed limitation of this work exclude that valuable series of circumstantial testimony, which (after the genuineness and independency of the Gospels are proved,)\* arises from their records of the posthumous interviews of Christ with his disciples.

But there are important indirect proofs of this great event

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\* Towards which proof also, the *discrepancies* of that circumstantial testimony themselves remarkably contribute. Who can suppose that impostors writing in concert an account of this cardinal fact, this turning point of the faith, should hazard disagreements, which would prove a stumbling-block to many, and which, in so short a narrative, might with perfect ease have been avoided, while a plausible degree of diversity in statement might have been studied and maintained. The very existence of such discussions as those of Gilbert West, Sherlock, &c. (the perusal of which, may satisfy candid and willing minds that the discrepancies are reconcilable,) implies that they are such as even unskilful and incautious inventors could not have suffered to remain. Yet the infidel attributes such oversights to the same vulgar inventor or inventors who were capable of conceiving and delineating the character of Jesus!

to be derived from the sequel, if we can there presumptively, show, without assuming the truth of the New Testament that before Christ's death miracles were wrought by himself, and after it by his apostles. Not that the whole presumptive proof for these is available towards confirming the reality of Christ's resurrection; since it partly arises from the prior evidence of that event itself:—for which reason we have argued, *before* treating of those, that the proof of Christ's resurrection is valid, and the counter-evidence nought. But still so much of the proof for those miracles, as is drawn from *other* sources, will go in corroboration of that cardinal fact. Nor is this, I conceive, reasoning *in a circle*; though *part* of the proof is reciprocal. If we have here found for the resurrection of Jesus a measure of evidence, which (though not nearly *all*,) forbids *unbelief*, then this one miracle will be taken by us as a strong presumption for the reality of others wrought in the same cause, which are recorded to have closely preceded and followed it;—when separate proofs of them shall be adduced, this presumption will be additional to those as a confirmative proof;—and conversely, that measure of belief in the other miracles which is built on *separate* grounds, will corroborate our belief of the resurrection.—For who can believe that Christ wrought “mighty works,” (even such as we shall find his enemies ascribing to him,) and yet died a death of anguish and ignominy, without being “redeemed from the power of the grave;” or that the apostles wrought “signs and wonders,” while the soul of their disgraced leader “was left in Hades, and his flesh saw corruption?” Nay, who will easily persuade himself in this case that they would even have *affected* miraculous powers, imitating that hazardous expedient which *had* so ill availed their master, or else originally

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\* P. 3. above.



adopting it, (if the sceptic prefer that less credible alternative,) though *he had not* done so? What possible hope, if Jesus had not risen, could prompt them either to revive his baffled devices, or to assume pretensions on which even he had not chosen to venture? If, therefore, we should stop at showing that the apostles laid *claim* to miraculous powers, without proceeding to argue that they really possessed them; yet would this claim or pretension itself, made by persons situated as they were, be no slight auxiliary proof of the reality of Christ's resurrection. To this, in the sequel, the reader's attention will be recalled, in order that he may revert to this chapter with accessions of proof for the miracle of which it treats.

## CHAPTER X.

ON THE PROBABILITY THAT MIRACLES WOULD BE  
WROUGHT BY CHRIST'S IMMEDIATE FOLLOWERS.

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## SECTION I.

*Recapitulation.—Such miracles not superfluous :—  
argued from non-completion of proofs and means  
since acquired.*

A slight view of what Christianity *is*, has *done*, and is still *doing*, as compared with other religions, and with the character of human nature, led us, in an early stage of this work, to the inference, that it was “not of men.” This conclusion was strengthened by investigating its earliest *history*; drawing thence a contrast of immense difficulties, and mighty successes, which constrain us yet further to the same belief of a *something* super-

human which produced the result.<sup>a</sup> But then it would be naturally asked—what *was* that something? We have since endeavoured, in part, to ascertain this; and have found in the resurrection of the crucified founder, a miracle most strongly testified of as real;—tacitly admitted, besides, by enemies, in their silence, their concessions, and their neglect of adopting and recording the only effectual mode of disproof;—a miracle also without *which*, the results, as we contend, *could* not have occurred.<sup>b</sup> By the tallying, therefore, of this one powerfully *attested*, wholly *undisproved*, and itself *indispensable* event, with the prior conclusion that some miracle there *must* have been, we have corroborated each of the previous arguments for a divine origin of the religion. For the strong and

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<sup>a</sup> See the recapitulation in Ch. viii. above, vol. i. pp. 330-3, and the references there.

<sup>b</sup> Having attempted, throughout this work, a series of arguments, which, while they have each some independent strength, should each have some additional strength from their successive and reciprocal connexion, I do not scruple tautology in retracing that connexion, in order not only to recall to view what has been so far established or aimed at, but also to point out the auxiliary bearing of the succeeding towards the preceding proofs, and to aid the reader in judging whether those which remain to be treated of are worth his attention, either in relation to the former, or for their own separate weight.

uncontrolled *testimony* concerning *this* miracle,—and the special necessity for *it*, to prevent the ruin of the sect,—at once accredit and illustrate our prior reasonings on the necessity of *some* miracle; and thus complete the proof that *one* signally miraculous event, at least, there must have been, and was; and, therefore, that the religion is of God.<sup>c</sup> If, however, we could know nothing more on the subject of Christian miracles, and this kind of proof were, therefore, here to terminate,<sup>d</sup> although it might, indeed, suf-

\* Could it be imagined that a heathen philosopher, intimately acquainted with the previous state of society, had retired to a hermitage in the reign of Tiberius, and lived in unbroken solitude till the accession of Domitian; and that then the first visitor of his cell had faithfully sketched to him the rise and character of Christianity, but as if *prophetically*, (from a sibyl,) without any statement of miraculous causes, and with a prediction of the founder's deeply degrading condemnation, but not of his death,—the hermit, I think, would have abundant reason to say—these things which you foretell cannot happen without a miracle of *some* kind, and of a kind *also* which shall repair the founder's utter disgrace.—But if he were then told that the sketch had been historical, and the events real, told likewise of the founder's death, and the strongly attested miracle of the resurrection, he would thus discover a cause or power remarkably agreeing to his previous conclusion; and moreover the *only* one which could remedy the extreme degradation attaching to the founder's name and fate.

<sup>d</sup> It is no violent supposition that the Acts of the Apos.

fice, especially as connected, by us, with evidences of entirely different kinds,—to prove the religion divine, yet it would not be fully satisfactory; for one miracle would not seem adequately to account for the very extensive and rapid consequences. Those multitudes of Christians who were “born at once,”<sup>e</sup> in the first age, could no otherwise have known of this one miracle, than by testimony:<sup>f</sup> and when we consider how lightly, by some heathens, and how superstitiously by others, their *own* records of prodigies were esteemed, it would appear strange that the *history* of Christ’s resurrection (unsupported by any present miracles,) had so availed to their conversion.<sup>g</sup>

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ties, and those particular epistles which allude to their miracles, might not have been written, or not have come down to us; and that the slighter references to them by enemies, which we shall hereafter cite, might also have perished. In that case our *knowledge* of Christian miracles would *end* with the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>e</sup> See Origen, quoted ch. viii. vol. i. p. 353.

<sup>f</sup> Some *other* kinds of proof for the new religion did not then yet exist, or in but a very incomplete manner; as will be seen more fully below.

<sup>g</sup> Especially when we consider that the history of miracles in the Jewish scriptures seems to have made no impression on them, and that they appear to have had a prejudice concerning Jewish credulity. It makes no material difference in this argument, though we suppose the prior miracles of Christ to have been also testified of.

Unless it can be shown that more miracles were quite *superfluous* to the success of this religion, or that all, except the resurrection of the founder, would be *unfit* to produce any conviction of its truth, or would be some-way *unworthy* of a religion really divine, we might reasonably conjecture that there *were* more; and even that some sort of references to them may be found in writings not Christian. For that means which can neither be deemed altogether unnecessary to an end, nor wholly inefficacious to conduce to it, nor unbecoming of it, (and for which we cannot well conceive any substitute,) may be fairly judged likely to have formed a part of the actual means employed; and to have been assigned or adverted to as such.

It will be worth while, therefore, to examine and substantiate this antecedent probability of other miracles.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> This will be in part also applicable as an answer to what may be said against the probability of miracles *generally*, as wrought in attestation of a divine religion; which is, of course, important; because if we can satisfy ourselves that the presumption is not really *against*, but *for* such a sort of interpositions, we shall be thus prepared to attach greater weight to the actual *evidence* of miracles, as being only the record of that sort of means which we have previously admitted to be highly credible, if not also in some sense necessary.—It may indeed be thought, that this discussion,

Now the argument *against* the probability of many or several miracles having been wrought to introduce and attest Christianity, must proceed (as I suppose,) on one of the grounds above hinted at; viz., either that they were wholly *unnecessary* to its early triumph, or, if not, would have been wholly *untadapted* to procure it; in other words, that men might easily be brought to receive it *with-*

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as far as it regards the probability of miracles *in general*, comes too late; and ought rather to have preceded not only our reasonings on the truth of Christ's resurrection, but even *all* our previous arguments for the necessity of *some* miracle. But although each of those arguments may derive additional strength from our subsequent view of this subject, they do not at all *depend* on it. If, indeed, we had chosen to argue with those who pronounce miracles *impossible*, it must have been at the outset. But that was declined; and with those who only think them *improbable*, it was not requisite to argue for their probability earlier, inasmuch as we have endeavoured to show them the *necessity* of supposing *some* miracle, (*however* improbable they may deem it); and, moreover, to show both a necessity and a testimony for one "indispensable" miracle, which are strong enough to overcome all contrary presumptions. If we have proved that without *some* one, and without *that* particular one, the religion and its history *cannot* be rationally accounted for, then the question of such miracles being more or less *likely*, was not there requisite. But with regard to *others*, (both prior and subsequent,) alleged to be connected with this religion, a doubt may be more reasonably entertained whether they

out them; that had it not been so, they could not have been brought to do so *by* them; or else, that this multiplication of miracles was unworthy of Deity.

With regard to the first point,—how far these miracles would be essential, or at least important, to the rapid success of the religion,—it is not, perhaps, in general, enough remembered, how much less evidence of some *other* kinds was possessed by those to whom the religion was first preached, and

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were *absolutely needful* to its success, or even whether they would really conduce to it. Here then is the fit place to show, that they might, at least, be very important and useful, and were therefore highly probable. This will prepare us to receive even hostile intimations and partial admissions of Jews and heathens concerning them, as grounded in their real occurrence. It will also retrospectively confirm (*à fortiori*,) our arguments for the fact of *some* needful miracle; and of the *one* which was indispensable; by destroying or weakening the presumption against such events generally; and may thus induce a review of those arguments by such, (if such there be,) as have said on their first perusal—‘True, Christianity cannot be *accounted for* without a miracle; but though I do not pronounce a miracle impossible, I think it so extremely improbable, that I would rather leave the events quite *unaccounted for* than adopt this solution.’\*

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\* See Supplement to this section.



during the whole life of the cotemporaries of Christ,<sup>i</sup> than subsequently, as in the days of Justin or of Origen. In the times of those fathers, the argument drawn from the *propagation* of the religion was from the fact as complete, and, from the novelty, much more impressive, than it is now. For the same reason, the argument from the Old Testament *prophecies*, of the calling of the Gentiles by Messiah, and the dispersion of the Jews, was then become fully available. Those circumstantial prophecies, also, which were alleged to be fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus, could be compared with the written memoirs of his life and death, then published, and in many hands; and the *collection* of the New Testament into a volume, offered (at least between the times of Justin and Origen,<sup>k</sup>) an *entire* view of that substantial harmony of doctrine and fact, amidst real variation and apparent discrepancy, which forms in itself a proof so powerful. But in the years from the reign of Claudius to that of Vespasian, during which a “great mul-

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<sup>i</sup> Especially before the destruction of Jerusalem, which it is not likely that any apostle, except John, survived, since all had probably reached an advanced age, (even if not exhausted by labour or cut off by violence,) before that event.

<sup>k</sup> See Paley Evid. pt. i. c. ix. sec. 3, vol. i. 230-2.

titude" of Christians suffered at Rome,<sup>1</sup> the argument from *success* was obviously less complete, because that success was less wide in extent, and less secure in duration. For the same reasons, the *prophecy* respecting the call of the Gentiles could not be steadily viewed in its broad and convincing fulfilment; and the prophetic proofs arising at the destruction of Jerusalem did not yet exist. During the earlier years of that period, the New Testament was, in great part, unpublished; and even till nearly the close of it, the writings of St. John are thought by most critics not to have been extant, and the other Gospels and Epistles, collectively, could be possessed by few.<sup>m</sup> The accordance, therefore, of the apostolic writings with each other, and with the Old Testament, and the wonderful

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<sup>1</sup> See above, vol. i. p. 346.

<sup>m</sup> We are told by Eusebius that in the reign of Trajan "many of the disciples travelled abroad—to preach Christ, and deliver the scriptures of the divine gospels." [τῶν τῶν θείων εὐαγγελίων παραδίδοναι γραφῆν]\* Not only does the phrase intimate that the epistles were not then always united with the gospels, but it is most probable, from the comparative cheapness and portableness of the gift, that the gospels only, or even a *separate* gospel (as has been often the case in modern missions) were at first distributed; and if so in Trajan's reign, much more before the death of the apostles.

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\* Lar. i. 336, and Paley Ev. i. 229.

character of the religion, as developed by the unity of these writings, could not be fully appreciated as a source of evidence. Even where the Gospels *were* presented to heathen inquirers, and they were disposed to give credence to such parts of the memoirs of Jesus as were not miraculous, it does not follow that they had a Hebrew Bible, or Septuagint version within reach, or that, if they had, they could there have examined, for themselves, the predictions concerning the birth and death of the Messiah, and the minuter circumstances of his history,—with which those acknowledged memoirs corresponded. If the apostle or disciple could *speak* to them in their own tongue, he assuredly could not present them with a written version of the scriptures in it.<sup>n</sup> We may, therefore, affirm, as it respected the great majority of the Heathen to whom the gospel was preached; that if miracles were not wrought (or at least were not wrought in appearance,) by the *first* teachers of Christianity, through the first forty years of

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<sup>n</sup> This, though the remark be more especially meant to be applied to their want of opportunity for studying the *Old* Testament, and consequently the whole prophetic proof,—yet, of course, extends to the New. The want of versions in the apostolic age, must have rendered the gift of a gospel, even if the teacher could impart it, useless to the common

its propagation, little or nothing in the shape of proof for this new religion was offered, except the oral testimony of the teachers, concerning the resurrection of their master, and his prior miracles ; combined with their oral account and interpretation of unknown Jewish prophecies, and with the self-evidence of that doctrine of holiness, pardon, and renovation, which they individually proclaimed, and *alleged* to be that of their fellow-labourers also. I mean not to depreciate the power of these kinds of evidence. On the contrary, I conceive the testimony of suffering witnesses, whose depositions inquiry could then confirm or refute, and also, the glorious newness and excellency of the Christian doctrine, even as orally announced by a single teacher, to have been powerful means of conversion ;—nay, that the doctrine itself has been, in all cases, and in every age, the *proximate* means of real conversion, and, in some instances, the primary

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people of Pontus, Illyricum, or Spain.\* Those will hardly tell us that there were *versions*, who question whether the *originals* were published so early ; nor will those expect that the first heathen hearers in the provinces could study the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, or that all of them would be able to read even a version, who imagine with Celsus and Julian, that they were of the lowest ranks.

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\* See vol. i. pp. 219-20.

means also.<sup>o</sup> But it is fallacious (not the less) for Christians to consider it as having been, or being, in any large class of instances, even among the poor

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<sup>o</sup> Neither this admission, nor the similar one which was made in the last chapter, (p. 16) will be found on reflection really to contradict what had been previously advanced, (at p. 2) that the scheme of Christian doctrine was "in some sense a miracle of *repulsion*." At least it will not be found inconsistent with that opinion by such as admit the operation of a divine influence on the heart in genuine conversion. The Christian doctrine is opposed to all the corrupt *wishes* of man; to self-indulgence, and self-idolatry;—but not to his real *wants*, his spiritual necessities, and genuine happiness. That, which is, to corrupt human nature, (to man as he is and has been) a miracle of repulsion, has become, in every age, to many, through a new internal light, and rectified bias of the soul, a miracle of *attraction*. Nor is the knowledge of this, as a *fact*, confined to Christians. The infidel may neither think it a change by divine influence, nor a change to *right* apprehension. He may call it, if he please, a *perversion*. But the fact he cannot deny. No one doubts, it is presumed, that Augustine, Lord Rochester, Count Struensee, Colonel Gardiner, John Newton, the academician Laharpe, and many others, learned to love and adhere to that scheme of doctrine, which they had for many years hated and scorned, and which the majority of men dislike. If their change was to the right and true view of things, as Christians believe it was, then that doctrine appears more miraculous or unearthly still, which could be at first so repulsive to men of the world, and yet so attract them at length. If, on the contrary, they then took the delusive and perverted view of things, as infidels allege, then this only proves the more strongly that

and unlettered, the *sole* means of conversion or *sole* support of faith. The least informed converts of our own day, whether from nominal Christianity

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the doctrine is naturally *not* adapted to the acceptance of human nature. The fact is, (whatever be held the *cause*) that it is repulsive to mankind at large, attractive to some; but it does not follow that it usually becomes thus attractive without *external* means and persuasives, first inducing a serious and reverential *attention* to it, and afterwards seconding, or corroborating all along, its self-evidencing appeal to the heart.

Unbelievers, however, are not very forward to investigate this fact; for, after all, according to ordinary apprehension, an effect must have a *cause*; and it is not *easy* to explain, in so corrupt and proud a being as man, a change which makes him love a pure, severe, and humbling doctrine, and assimilates him to it,—by mere caprice or superstition. One of the most noted *ancient* infidels, Celsus, seems to have denied the possibility that such a change should happen. For he wrote, as quoted by Origen, “it is indeed altogether manifest, that those who are sinners, both naturally and habitually, cannot be changed either by punishment or compassion; for completely to transform nature is the most difficult of all things.” [παρχαλῆπον]. Origen reminds him that he must qualify this assertion, if it were only on the score of *philosophic* conversions, instancing in the grossly abandoned Phædo and Polemo: “however,” (he adds,) “that the method and eloquence of philosophic discourses should have thus wrought on those persons, though their life was wicked, is not altogether marvellous; but when we observe the doctrines which Celsus pronounces plebeian [ιδιωτικῆς], filled with a power like incantation, and see them turning men in crowded multitudes,

or from heathenism, although the deep suitability of the gospel to their consciences and their wants, is usually (and not to such alone) the first means of effectual conviction, and the last resource in doubt, yet cannot be supposed to be uninfluenced

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from the life of the vicious to that which is most regular, from the life of the unjust to that which is good, and from the temper of the base and effeminate to such firmness, that death is despised through the piety apparent in them, how shall we not justly wonder at the power which is thus evinced?"\* This reflection may illustrate our former occasional remarks on the argument for a divine origin of Christianity, from its effects in the renovation of character; (see vol. i. pp. 56-7, and *ibid.* pp. 125-6;) and those may in turn contribute to confirm the *present* observations.

That the gospel often has produced, and often still produces, a marvellous change in human character, is a fact pressed on the unbeliever, by ancient, and (we thank God) by *modern* instances. Indeed, I might have placed in the same line with the well-known persons above-named, born in Christendom, but who lived as heathens,—certain recent converts from base idolatry, in both hemispheres, whose change appears to be equally astonishing. My only reason for not doing so is, that that these conversions cannot be so much a matter of general *notoriety* in Europe, from the remoteness of their several scenes of occurrence; and, for the most part, not even on the spot, from the less distinguished station of the parties.

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\* Orig. in Cels. l. iii. pp. 151-2, Edit. Spenc.

by other kinds of evidence, in the first acquisition and subsequent confirmation of their faith. Those who become converts from a state of carelessness and irreligion, in lands where reformed Christianity has long prevailed, are quite aware (however small their knowledge) that the Jewish and Christian scriptures are revered and prized as true histories by the best men in ranks above them; to whose learning, as well as honesty, they can trust. On the authority, therefore, of persons in every sense their superiors, they reasonably hold them to be such; and thus the various arguments,—from prophecy,—from miracles, as attested by the voluntary sufferings of the first witnesses,—from the success of the gospel,—*all concur* with the excellency and adapt-  
edness of its doctrines, as means of their receiving the truth. Let a minister or layman, whose piety and learning are known, read to a poor neighbour, distressed in conscience, or give to him to read, only some selected parts of the Bible,—suppose the Prophecies of Isaiah, the Gospel of John, and the Acts of the Apostles; assuring the inquirer that the first is well known to have been written some hundred years before Christ appeared, and the others to have been written soon after his disappearance, by his followers;—if he has never attended to these writings before, he will probably be first and most deeply impressed (both as a proof of divinity and



a motive of thankfulness,) with the promises of pardon and reconciliation to God, which they all agree to offer; but he will have, also, in a very short compass, all the other arguments of their divinity, above noticed. He will not only say, this is the word of God, because it reveals and meets my deepest *necessities*; but this is the word of God, for here is a wonderful *agreement* in these writings, though the writers were of such different times and characters; and, this is the word of God, for such a Saviour was here *predicted*; and his followers preached his death and resurrection truly, for they suffered the “loss of all things” in his cause; and this word was itself *planted and spread abroad* in a way that showed the hand of the Almighty.

Even although these several grounds of conviction should never be mentioned, or at all, even silently, analysed, by the inquirer, (which may generally be the case,) yet in effect they must be supposed usually to act on him, and to be the complex means by which the spirit of God persuades and converts.

The case of the modern heathen, the Tahëitan or the Hindoo, we admit, considerably differs. His foreign teacher cannot, at first, be fully trusted. Not having been a long resident, and being the agent of persons at a great distance, neither his veracity, nor his competent knowledge of the truth

of his own sacred writings, can be at first so much relied on; but then, be it observed, his knowledge is felt to be very superior, in most points, to that of the heathen himself. He either brings with him, or gradually prepares for the inquirers' use, those sacred writings translated into their own tongue, and thus puts them in possession of the complex grounds of proof;<sup>p</sup> by this time, also, if the missionary's uprightness, good sense, and benevolence, have stood the test of prying and hostile observation, a measure of confidence must be generated, that what he gives as true histories and documents, are indeed such, or at least are held to be such by his more instructed *nation*. Thus it cannot be said, generally, even of the modern converts from heathenism, any more than of illiterate converts from nominal to real Christianity, that external evidence has *no* share in their conversion. It may act differently in different cases, sometimes serving chiefly to *prepare the way* for the doctrine to be examined, sometimes chiefly to confirm the previously felt divinity of that doctrine; or it may sometimes synchronize with the doctrine, in stamping combined impressions of heavenly truth upon the mind: it may be here the main ground of

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<sup>p</sup> This, with the additional influence of *printing*, has been already noticed in ch. v. sec. 3. vol. i. p. 216.

belief, and there the subordinate ; for the proportions and modes in which internal and external evidence are jointly rested on, may be never clearly ascertainable by any teacher, nor by any convert ; (who of us will state or calculate them in our own case ?) but it cannot be thought to be in many cases excluded, or so ineffective and redundant in the sum of means, that they who become Christians with it, would, *cæteris paribus*, have become so without it.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> It is not necessary to our argument to show that no case has occurred, or can occur, where the external evidence has no weight, or no material or determining weight, in conversion ; but it is apparent that, in order to suppose such a case, we must place the party in circumstances *very* rare and peculiar. If a heathen meet with *one* of the four gospels, or a tract containing a summary of scripture facts and doctrines, in his house or in his path, coming he knew not whence or from whom, and, on the reading and study of it, find the doctrines so wonderfully adapted to display the divine perfection, and to secure his own peace, holiness, and happiness, that he thence feels constrained to believe the memoir to be no romance, but a true history (or abstract of histories) of miraculous facts, at once forming a basis and seal of the doctrines ; and so become a real Christian ; this person may be viewed as a believer on internal evidence, *merely* or *purely*. If we suppose him to have the whole New Testament, then *not* so purely : because to possess the whole New Testament is to possess various books, which all refer to the same series of events, but which no one can rationally suppose to

It will be seen that my purpose in bringing to the reader's view the almost universal concurrence of some kind of external evidence, as a means (more or less) in modern conversion, has been to evince more fully what was lately argued,<sup>r</sup> namely, that unless the *first* propagators of Christianity wrought apparent miracles, they had far *less* advantage in most respects for persuading and converting the heathen, than our home-missionaries have for converting a pagan at home, and even than

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have all come from one pen, or to be all *mere* fictions on one topic: each one and all of them, therefore, afford a sort of external evidence for each other one, that they have some foundation in facts. Were it granted, however, that a heathen, converted by means of the whole New Testament alone, (strictly without other communication,) might be considered as a convert by means of doctrines only,—still it is evident, not only that such instances must in our age be very rare, but that in the *first* propagation of Christianity they could not occur, on account of the *non-completion* of those writings. It has been ingeniously argued, and with a pious purpose, that conversions from heathenism, in the apostolic day, often took place without the evidence of miracles, simply by the “preaching of the word.” But has it not been overlooked, in that argument, that the “preaching of the word,” by men endowed with the “gift of tongues” (a gift which could hardly be unknown to their auditors, since they must have had frequently to exercise it, with respect at least to a part of them) was *in itself* a miracle?

<sup>r</sup> Pp. 81-5 above.

our foreign missionaries for converting an idolater abroad. It has been said above,\* that if such an inquirer had only three chosen books from the Bible put into his hands, and reliance enough in the donor to believe them severally of such an *age* as he declares, he would have there a variety of kinds of proof. But in the reign of Nero, the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John were not extant. Of the other gospels it cannot be supposed that copies were distributed largely; or that if so, they would have been intelligible, (whether in Greek or Hebrew,) to the poorer *heathen* of Italy or Spain; still less that these received or could study the *prophets*. No doubt some arguments since arising to us from those books were in part orally adduced by the teachers; but, as it has been already observed, the events were still very incomplete: not only the *books* were in great part wanting, but the *facts*. The Gentiles were but *beginning* to be called, the Jews were not punished and scattered: the progress of the gospel could only be appealed to partially; and we may add, on the supposition which we are combating, (that of there being no apostolical miracles,) the missionary was under great disadvantage as to language; nor could he pretend miracles to have been

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\* Pp. 87-8, above.

wrought by his colleagues at a distance, without being at once challenged by the sneerers, and importuned by the credulous, to exhibit at least one himself. In the character of their sufferings and hazards, as seals of a *primary* testimony, doubtless the professed eye witnesses of Christ's ascension had a special advantage, as compared with all subsequent teachers; but, except in this one point, it seems évident, that,—if devoid of miraculous gifts,—they had every *disadvantage*. Why, then, has the success of modern missionaries, even the most zealous and accomplished, been almost uniformly slow? Or, why was the success of these primitive missionaries so marvellously rapid? Will the sceptic say that miracles are not *wanted* to account for the difference? What can he substitute? Will he say the ancient heathen were ignorant and full of weakness and credulity, and that the modern are *not* so? Or, that their idolatry was less organized, and popular, and radicated? Or that the apostles and their coadjutors,—the “vain and futile men,” the “untaught” and “low”<sup>t</sup> of Jewish tradition, the “abjects” or “abandoned” of Celsus,<sup>u</sup> the “ignorant liars” of Hierocles,<sup>v</sup> the “poor

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<sup>t</sup> See vol. i. pp. 90—1.

<sup>u</sup> επιρρητης—εξωλεσταιτης μονης. See *ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>v</sup> ψιυσται και απαιδευτοι. See *ibid.*

rustics" of Porphyry,<sup>v</sup> with all the "barbarisms and solecisms"<sup>x</sup> of which heathens agreed to accuse them,—were more qualified to spread their religion rapidly without the gift of miracles, than Vanderkemp, Ward, or Heber? He will scarcely take refuge from the supposition of visible miracles in that of *invisible*;<sup>y</sup> for we should again have

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<sup>v</sup> Rusticani et pauperes.—See vol. i. p. 91.

<sup>x</sup> See *ibid.* p. 92.

<sup>y</sup> We may certainly conceive of a *secret* or *invisible* miracle: as if twenty eminent Christian teachers in different parts of this country should, without any kind of communication, or any other apparent reason, profess Bouddhism; and this with such sincerity as to resign their several charges. To render the miracle more complete and indisputable, it may be supposed that no one of them can have seen any treatise of or concerning that superstition; but that the doctrine impressed on each is found after research to accord with the Bouddhist writings. It is needless to say no instances of the kind can be produced; but it is material to observe, that, if any such *could* be produced,—if, for instance, it could be shown that any heathens had been secretly informed and imbued with Christian facts, doctrines, and tempers purely by a private internal revelation,—this, although a signal miracle, in a peculiar sense of the term, would not be so in the most proper and accepted sense; which is that of a supernatural *means*, a seal or ratification of facts, doctrines, and precepts, in order to their reception. The miracle, on the contrary, would in such case be, a preternatural change wrought *without* any means. Conversion of heart and life is frequently termed,

to urge the ulterior question—was that secret agency from heaven, or of demons?—It is much more likely that we may be vaguely yet gravely reminded of casual excitement and sympathetic contagion : or even referred to that instructive instance of it, the histrionic fever at Abdera ;<sup>2</sup> unless, indeed, a just suspicion should be felt, that this,

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and with some propriety, a secret miracle ; but it does not at all come under the above description, as an end wrought without means or apparent reason. It consists in the *application* of the highest and most cogent reasons, and the removal of that stupor or hardness from the mind which made it insensible to what was naturally adapted to affect it.

\* A strange incident mentioned by Lucian, where the patients in a town of Thrace suffered a sort of epidemic frenzy which prompted them to declaim tragic verse. This delirium was supposed to arise from their attendance on a celebrated actor in a very hot summer. Bayle has very insidiously, but I think very ineffectively remarked, that such a mental epidemic may explain the great successes of an enthusiast or heresiarch at certain junctures.\* The Abbé Bullet has given the whole passage, and thus repelled the sceptical insinuation. “Grant that there are epidemic diseases of the mind as well as the body ; can there be shown us in history some epidemic which has constantly ravaged the world for ages, and is not after seventeen centuries extinct ? Does the mania of the Abderitans, which extended not

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\* Genl. Dict. founded on Bayle. Art. Abdera, vol. i. 46—7, note h.



or any kindred incident, brought as the most analogous cases which history can furnish, might serve to strengthen, instead of impairing, our perverse conviction, that, for the early triumphs of the cross, signal and successive miracles were needed.<sup>aa</sup>

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beyond their city, and which the winter subdued, authorize the inference? The pagans did not treat the Christians as madmen. Are the delirious punished? They are pitied. Is it attempted to make them renounce their insanity by force of tortures? Are they masters of it? We may add that pagans, after juridical inquiries, recognised the regularity of the morals and habits of Christians; and more than this, proposed to themselves some points of their doctrine and conduct as a model.\* These are the people whom our adversaries would have to pass for madmen.”†

<sup>aa</sup> Origen observes on this question—“To say, therefore, that they (the first disciples) wrought no miracles, but having believed, undertook with no sufficiency in discourse, nothing that resembled the dialectic wisdom of the Greeks, to teach this new doctrine to the nations which they visited, is altogether unreasonable [*πανυ εστιν αλογον.*] For in what did they confide, when they thus taught and innovated?”†

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\* See the quotations from Pliny, Lucian, Julian, &c. in ch. iii. above.

† Hist. pp. 107—8.

‡ Cont. Cels. Edit. Spenc. lib. i. p. 30.

## SUPPLEMENT.

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### ON THE SUPPOSED PRESUMPTION AGAINST MIRACLES IN GENERAL.

It would be unjust to the reader to mention the general difficulty which unbelievers have raised as to the peculiar and exceeding improbability of miracles, without citing some able remarks of Bishop Butler and Dr. Price, on the fallacy of such an objection.

“1st.—There is a very strong presumption,” (observes Bishop Butler,) “against the most ordinary facts *before* the proof of them, which yet is overcome by almost any proof. There is a presumption of millions to one against the story of Cæsar, or any other man. For suppose a number of common facts so and so circumstanced, of which one had no kind of proof, should happen to come into one’s thoughts, every one would, without any possible doubt, conclude them to be false; and the like may be said of a single common fact. —The question of importance is concerning the *degree* of the peculiar presumption supposed against miracles. If there be the presumption of millions to one against the most common facts, what can a small presumption, additional to this, amount to, though it be peculiar? It cannot be estimated, and is as nothing. 2dly.—If we leave out the consideration of religion, we are in such total darkness upon what causes, occasions, reasons, or circumstances, the present course of

nature depends, that there does not appear any improbability for or against supposing, that five or six thousand years may have given scope for causes, occasions, reasons, or circumstances, from whence miraculous interpositions may have arisen; and from this, joined with the foregoing observation, it will follow, that there must be a presumption beyond all comparison greater, against the *particular* common facts just now instanced in, than against miracles *in general*; before any evidence of either. But 3dly.—Take in the consideration of religion, or the moral system of the world, and then we see distinct particular reasons for miracles; to afford mankind instruction, additional to that of nature, and to attest the truth of it.—Lastly, miracles must not be compared to common natural events, but to the extraordinary phenomena of nature; and then the comparison will be between the presumption against miracles, and the presumption against such uncommon appearances.—Upon all this I conclude, that there is certainly no such presumption against miracles, as to render them in any wise incredible: that, on the contrary, our being able to discern reasons for them gives a positive credibility to the history of them, in cases where those reasons hold; and that it is by no means certain that there is any peculiar presumption at all, from analogy, against miracles, as distinguished from other extraordinary phenomena.”\*

Dr. Price has quoted this passage in his “Dissertation on Historical Evidence and Miracles;”† and has supported its conclusions by more exact and ingenious reasonings; but they are not such as admit of abridgment or selection without disadvantage. He has demonstrated that “in our regard to the reports of testimony,” we are governed or determined “much more by some particular circumstances in facts than by any intrinsic improbabilities which they

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\* Analogy, &c. pp. 197—8, abridged.

† Four Dissertations, p. 440, note.

have." "Were a person to tell us that in throwing *six* common dies together, he had thrown the *six* numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, our assent would be gained with some difficulty, though the improbability of doing this is only 64 to 1. But were the same person to tell us any story of a common and uninteresting nature, we should receive it without scruple, "though, perhaps, on account of the variety of particular circumstances in it, previously improbable in a higher degree *than can well be computed*.\*

"In order to gain assent to a report, it is not necessary that there should be greater probability or odds *for* its truth, than *against* the happening of the event. There is a very strong presumption against the simplest common story before any evidence for it. On the contrary, against miracles *in general* there is no presumption at all; for it has been proved that we have no reason for thinking that the course of nature will continue always the same. Miracles, therefore, *in general*, are in the strictest sense *not improbable*."† If the reader suspect a fallacy in the views or inferences of Dr. Price on this subject, I would recommend him to peruse attentively that author's whole dissertation.

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\* Ibid. p. 450.

† Ibid. p. 452.

## CHAPTER X.

ON THE PROBABILITY THAT MIRACLES WOULD  
BE WROUGHT BY CHRIST'S IMMEDIATE FOL-  
LOWERS.

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## SECTION II.

*Such miracles not unadapted to promote the Christian  
cause ; nor unworthy of a divine religion.*

It may, possibly, be objected by some, that the reasonings of the preceding section, although plausible, are by a different view of the subject annulled ; since, however speciously it be argued from the weakness of other means and incompleteness of other proofs, that more and supernatural means and attestations were wanted, it cannot be really proved that what we term miracles would have been *useful and efficient* ; but may, on the

contrary, be shown that they would have been unfit, or even injurious :<sup>a</sup> that, therefore, as the religion *was* propagated, but could not have been so *by* them, it is certain they were not wrought to no purpose, (or worse than none,) and that its propagation took place *without* them.

This argument against the *fitness* and probable *efficiency* of miracles, as means of conversion, must be raised on facts which we have already glanced at, and shall shortly have further to examine ;—viz., the high and constant pretension to miracles in support and proof of idolatrous systems ; and the prevalent belief and profession of magic. Those facts, it may be thought, would preclude the efficacious influence of miracles, (real or feigned,) as means of proof for a new and hostile faith, upon *any* class of heathens, and even upon Jews. The credulous among the heathen, crediting and revering, as they certainly did, the prodigies of their own several religions, would not be moved to *renounce* them by those wrought in attestation of a rival creed, even though a divine reality in these latter were admitted. But this admission would be needless ; for, as the same credu-

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<sup>a</sup> See sec. i. pp. 79-81, above.—I do not, however, apprehend this to be a natural or *usual* objection ; though not devoid of plausibility.

lous persons believed in magical and unhallowed, as well as in sacred miracles, they would have an easier evasion of such proof, by ascribing all wonders produced in defence of an intolerant atheistic novelty, to the power of infernal and unlawful arts. And as for the incredulous, a very influential minority, who ascribed both the wonders of magic, and, though with more reserve, the miracles of the heathen gods, to human artifice,—they, of course, would be more completely fortified themselves, and, by their contempt and ridicule, would contribute to fortify others, against the miraculous pretensions of obscure and unsanctioned agitators.

If they could despise (at least in secret) the miracles of religions venerable by their antiquity and nationality—and inveigh openly against magicians, as criminal deceivers,—what chance was there (it will be asked) that miracles, wrought in support of a new and exclusive creed, should avail for their conversion? While these would be inefficient with the people, by whom other prodigies were either venerated or dreaded, they would be equally, or more so, with the philosophic, by whom other prodigies were execrated or scorned. Few things, therefore, (it may be argued,) are less probable, than that a divine revelation should be attested and propagated by such a kind of means, as both the many and the few, “the wise and the

unwise," would, though for opposite reasons, be predisposed to reject.

Now, in answer to these reasonings, we admit that such *was* the state of popular and philosophic feeling in regard to miracles; and that this credulity of some, and this incredulity of others, jointly conduce to explain why, or rather how, the apostolic miracles, supposing them real, were yet rejected by many, and even made a plea for branding the creed with which they stood connected.

The conjecture of its alliance either with preternatural magic or with juggling imposture, would often be a pretext for not examining its claims; and often, perhaps, embolden even eye-witnesses of miracles to resist the belief that they were seals of a divine commission.<sup>b</sup> It is allowed, therefore, that miracles, so far from being likely to prove an infallible and universal means of persuasion, were likely, in the then state of the world, to be often ineffectual, and sometimes even to *impede* the reception of the doctrine. But it does not at all thence follow, that they were unadapted, on *the whole*, to promote it, and so an improbable means. To show this, it must be made

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<sup>b</sup> This point will be more fully treated in the Supplement to ch. xi. sec. 2, where it will be explained that the opinions of that age are not viewed as the radical cause, but only as the *auxiliary plea*, of such rejection.



appear, that their absence would have been, on the whole, *more* conducive to its success; of which it will be very hard to convince a sound understanding. Few (if any) kinds of proof are *irresistible*, by the human mind; and a kind which is liable to special perversions and evasions at the time when offered, may yet be among the most forcible in itself, and also specially valuable at that very time; inasmuch as its omission would be a far stronger topic of cavil, than its introduction. Thus, although real miracles might be no convincing proof, to those who did not ascertain their unrivalled simplicity and clearness,—and even a ground of objection to some, as implying illicit arts,—it would have furnished (we conceive,) a *far more* popular plea for the rejection of the gospel, that while other religions, alleged by the Christians to be false, could adduce continued miracles, the one which they recommended as true *lacked* this attestation.<sup>c</sup> And the Jew would of course have joined with the heathen in this feeling.

But, it may be said, lastly, by those who reject all revelations,—was the Almighty likely to adopt for his truths a mode of proof which has been, con-

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<sup>c</sup> Nothing is more common with objectors, than to ground a cavil or suspicion, on the presence of that, the absence of which would have been seized as a still *more* advantageous topic of complaint.

fessedly, in all ages, and all lands, abused by men or demons, to purposes of wicked imposture? Is it worthy of the Divine Being, consonant with his glory and dignity, to take up, as it were, the implements of delusion, and stoop to work with these? We answer—certainly not, if the wonders supposed to be wrought by his commission were to be “lying wonders,”—but that God should cause to be *really* wrought, for the promotion of his truth, wonders like some of those which crafty men have only seemed to work, for the interests of falsehood, is a condescension which we can deem no way unworthy of Him.<sup>d</sup> The means will strictly harmonize with the end, the agency with the cause to be served, if while evil men or spirits have produced the semblance of miracles to support pretended religious truths, the Good Spirit ordains real miracles

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<sup>d</sup> Not that we would represent the Divine Being as the imitator of his feeble creatures. The fact is *they* have been, in such cases, the weak, deceitful imitators of his power and skill. How happy if they had sought to copy his *moral* attributes. On the *deistical* hypothesis, men are but imitators, for the creation and reproduction of animals was before the miracles both of Moses and the magicians; and according to the *atheist's* scheme, their imitative power is unspeakably sorry and despicable; for they have never yet been able, with all their intelligence and cunning, to match one among a million of the miracles of unintelligent fate, or unintelligible chance.

to attest genuine religious truths. It is not indeed probable that a holy and exalted Being should cause paltry, or puerile, or ostentatious miracles, to be wrought for the attestation of these truths, (and in *that* sense compete with a Pythagoras<sup>e</sup> or Apollonius), nor that, except for commensurate guilt, he should ordain miracles of destructive or punitive power: but it *is* probable, that he who wrought the beneficent miracle of creation, and thus manifested his eternal Godhead, should, when imposture had pretended beneficent miracles, for its own base ends, cause similar ones to be verily wrought, at once to display his *own* moral perfection, and impress on his creatures the truth of that system of doctrine which generates and inculcates *theirs*. It *is* probable, that he should thus cause truth to triumph over falsehood in her own favourite expedients, and far outvie the “cunning craftiness” of men, in the benign simplicity of genuine miracles, as well as of true doctrine. It is probable, also, that these miracles in favour of the truth, should be for a time frequent, various, and repeated, and wrought in different places, by different teachers of the same truths; inasmuch as the witnessing of them, however ineffectual with pre-

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\* See Weston on Miracles, pp. 44-5.

judiced and adverse spirits, would be yet much *more* efficacious than mere testimony, and their succession and variety (by permitting repeated observation) would tend to obviate that prejudgment of magic or collusion which might arise concerning one or few. It is probable also, (as I conceive) that when their non-confutation and their triumphant effects had evinced their reality, and when other proofs of the revelation had also been super-added, these would be withdrawn.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE APOSTOLIC  
MIRACLES.

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SECTION I.*Hostile admissions that the first Christians wrought  
wonders.*

IT was the purpose of the last chapter to show, that *other* miracles besides the resurrection of its founder, were quite likely to be wrought for the introduction of Christianity, as a divine religion ; because they can neither be considered as means which at that period would be *redundant*, nor as means *unadapted* to the end, nor as *unworthy* the majesty of a divine author. If our reasonings on these points have been just, then, so far from suspecting the religion of falsehood, on account of

reputed miracles attendant on its rise, those are precisely such seals of its truth and aids of its early diffusion, as we ought and are even compelled to look for ; the absence of which would have been very detrimental, if not ruinous, to its claims, in the view both of Jews and heathens ; the presence and multiplication of which were fully called for by the difficulties of the enterprise, and would be adapted, amidst all the perversions and cavils which we admit they would occasion, still to excite attention, and pave the way to conviction. Indeed, unbelievers in general, if they assume hypothetically the fact that "Jesus rose," will not fail, (I expect,) to call for other and subsequent miracles. They will say—prove *this*, and it is not at all probable that it should stand alone and unsupported. They will rather be apt to complain that unsuspicious miracles should so soon have ceased, or should have ceased even now, than to dispute, that, supposing the one on which we chiefly insist, others should have followed and preceded. We have already briefly intimated that the complaint or suspicion, arising from the early cessation of genuine indisputable miracles, appears groundless ; inasmuch as accessions of various proof had accrued by the close of the apostolic age, or very soon after,\*

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\* See ch. x. sec. 1. p. 82, above.

which went in a great measure to compensate for their withdrawment. To say nothing here of other proofs,—the one “mighty work” which those “mighty works” had by that time wrought—became itself the indication of their recent frequency and power. The “writing” of such a doctrine and such a hope in thousands of stony hearts through many lands, sufficiently attested that a super-human “hand” *had* traced it: it was no longer needful to see “the part of the hand that wrote.” The inscription was fresh and broad and bright enough across the empire, for all except those who were blinded by criminal prejudice to own,—here was “the finger of God.” This, indeed, is going somewhat beyond the immediate scope of our present remark, which has been merely to show, that neither the early frequency nor the early cessation of Christian miracles, (put as suppositions,) can be justly deemed improbable.

If, then, we have succeeded in dispelling from our minds the shifting cloud of prior presumptions *against* the reality of those miracles, we are now prepared, (as was observed above,)<sup>b</sup> to attach greater weight to actual evidence *for* them, direct

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<sup>b</sup> See p. 79, note.

or indirect, partial or complete, willing or reluctant; as being only the record of what we have *already* concluded to be highly *probable*, if not even in some sense necessary. Part of such evidence is annexed; though, in consistency with the plan of this work, it is only of the less explicit, chiefly of the reluctant, and therefore of the imperfect kind.<sup>c</sup> From this, however, the following intimations are collected. (1.)—The Talmuds, or ancient and authorized commentaries of the Jews

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<sup>c</sup> See Supplement (A.) to this section. It contains the chief references (which I have met with) to the wonderful works of the *followers* of Christ. Those which relate to the miracles of our Saviour will be given subsequently. This order (inverse to that of time) is adopted, because the admission of the apostolic miracles, even as wrought in appearance, is in some respects a stronger argument of their reality; and because the reality of these, when once established, is of itself a summary proof for that of the miracles of Jesus, supposing it be shown, that he made the like pretension. "The master must, at least, be equal to his disciples."\*

After what has been already observed,† the reader cannot be surprised at finding the works of both depreciated by enemies as magical; but this charge will be further examined in the sequel.

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\* Lally's Principles, iii. 2.

† Ch. x. sect. 2, above, and ch. ix. sect. 2, p. 52.



on their own scriptures, repeatedly record the pretensions of disciples of Jesus to miraculous gifts of healing, and even intimate their possession of some such powers, though, as they contend, unlawfully. (2.)—The more formal Jewish accounts of the rise of Christianity, distinctly mention prodigies to have been expected and demanded by the earliest Christians as the signs or credentials of an apostle, or envoy of Jesus. (3.)—The opinions or pretexts of the Jews, as discovered in controversy, ascribe the success of the religion to the magical arts of its first teachers. (4.)—Most of those heathen writers of the first ages, who either name and assail Christianity, or appear covertly to allude to it,<sup>d</sup> either affirm or hint at pretensions of its early propagators to supernatural powers, to prophesying, or divination, magic and wonder-working; and Celsus suggests that they were actually aided by demons, and so influenced their converts. (5.)—The emperor Julian, with a studied accumulation of phrase, denounces St. Paul as a magician quite unrivalled, and attributes eminence in a similar kind of powers to the apostles in general. (6.)—The same explanation of their success had been resorted to by Porphyry. (7.)—The opinion of their having exercised magic was current among heathens generally,

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<sup>d</sup> As Pliny the elder, Suetonius, Lucian, Phlegon, Hierocles.

as appears from the queries of magistrates, and from the remarks and replies of Christian controvertists ; while other customary evasions adopted by their enemies indicate, that they conceded the fact of preternatural or wonderful works being done in the name of Christ, attempting only to obviate or ward off the *inference* as to the divinity of his mission.

## SUPPLEMENT

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### A.

#### ON THE REFERENCES OR ALLUSIONS OF JEWS AND HEATHENS TO THE MIRACULOUS POWERS OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

The principal sources and particulars of these may be arranged as follows:—

1. *In extant Jewish books.*—The Talmuds contain acknowledgments that the disciples of Jesus made pretension to a miraculous power of healing; and their prohibitions and narratives afford a pretty strong implication, that besides laying claim to this power, they, at least, appeared to possess it. Thus—in the Gemara of Babylon, it is written, “No man shall converse with heretics, [הרמיינין]\* nor shall any

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\* “It is certain that the Christians are designated by the Jews, under the word heretics. (Minim or Minin, used above.) The doctrine of Christ and the apostles, is called Minoth, heresy. The books of the gospels are called “books of the Minim.”\*

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\* Edzard. Avod. Sara. note on c. 2. p. 255, where the author cites the Talmudical authorities.

one accept healing [מתרפאין] from them, even for his life," &c.\* This rule is supported by the story of the son of Dumah, which is also contained in the Jerusalem Talmud, and is thence extracted below.

In two parts of the Jerusalem Talmud there are two accounts of a miraculous cure, attempted by a primitive Christian. I insert that from the *Aboda Zara*, and sub-join the chief verbal differences of that in the *Sabb. Jeros.*; as these further illustrate the supposed *magical* and *occult* character of the cure. "The son of the son of Rabbi Joses, son of Levi, had swallowed poison. There came one and conjured [or enchanted, לחש] him by the name of Jesus, son of Panteri; † [ישוע בר פנתרי], and he revived, [or breathed again, ואינשם]. ‡ And as he was going out, it was said to him," (i. e. by the father,) "and what didst thou say over him? § he said to him, a certain word [מלת פלן] || and he said, he should have been left to die, and not have heard that word,—and so it came to pass." (i. e. he died.) ¶

In the above cited book of the Jerusalem Talmud, entitled, *Aboda Zara*, it is also related,—“Eleazar, the son of Dumah,

\* The text, and a Latin version are in Edzard. *Avod. Sara e Gemara Babylonica*, &c. c. ii. at p. 48, and in the notes on c. i. at p. 312.—(quoted in *Lar.* iii. 557.)

† In *Sabb. Jeros.* “by the name of Jesus Panterius.” [פנתרייה] The occasion of this calumnious name, given by the Jews to our Saviour, may be seen in *Orig. cont. Cels.* l. i. pp. 26 and 54. *Ed. Spenc.* ‡ In *Sabb. Jeros.* ואינשם.

§ *Ibid.* “How didst thou conjure” (or enchant him?) [מה לחשתה ליה].

|| *Ibid.* [מלתא פלוינית]. פלן is derived from a root signifying occult. See *Simon Lex. Heb.* p. 1290.

¶ See the original in *Raym. Pug. fid. pars. iii. dist. 3. c. 7.* p. 583, and the original of the account in the *Sabb. Jeros.* in *ibid.* pars. ii. c. 8. p. 289. Latin and English versions are given in *Lar.* iii. 558.

was bitten by a serpent; and there came James, [יעקב] a man from the village of Secaniah, one of the disciples of Jesus, the son of Panteria, to heal him. He said to him, I will speak [נִמַּא]\* to thee by the name of Jesus, son of Panteri, and thou shalt be healed. But Rabbi Ishmael said, that is not lawful for thee (or, that may not be to thee) son of Dumah: and he said to him, I will bring evidence (or proof) that he may heal me; and he permitted him not to bring evidence before he died."†

The Toldoth Jeschu tells us "that the early disciples of Jesus exacted of those who professed to be his envoys, that they should work miracles like those which he *himself* had wrought."‡ The passage of the Toldoth on which the Abbé Bullet grounds this remark, is the following. That book represents "one of the elders" as writing and concealing the "ineffable name," and then presenting himself to the Nazareans as an envoy or apostle of Jesus.—"They said to him,—*show us, by some prodigy*, [אֵימָה] that thou art *sent* of Jesus:—what prodigy, answered he, do you desire? We will, they replied, that thou shouldst perform the prodigies which Jesus performed when he was living. [הָאוֹרֵתִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יֵשׁוּ בְּחַיָּיו עָשָׂה לָנוּ גַם אַתָּה]. —He said, bring me a leper; and having laid his hands on him, he healed him. He commanded that a corpse should be brought him, and laid his hands upon it, and it lived, and stood upon its feet. These wicked men having

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\* Schultens and others, consider this word to mean especially, "speaking in a low and concealed voice." See Simon Lex. Heb. p. 960. If so, it corresponds to the notion of *incantation*, [לִרְשָׁא] a *murmuring* voice.

† The original is given in Pugio. fidei. p. iii. d. 3. c. 7. p. 583, and that of another account, differing considerably in expression, but not at all in sense, extracted from the Jewish gloss on Eccles. (Midrasch Koheleth) in ibid. p. li. c. 8. p. 289. One of these is in Lar. iii. 557-8, note b.

‡ B. Pr. p. 140.

seen these wonders, prostrated themselves before him, saying, —thou art verily sent of Jesus, since thou hast wrought the same prodigies which he wrought, &c.\* Afterwards, a “wise man, named Elias,” is represented as coming to the Christians in the name of Jesus. “The people said to him,—*show us by some true prodigy* [תן לנו אות אמתי] that Jesus hath sent thee. What prodigy, said he, do you desire?” &c.†

In the Jewish controversial book, entitled “*Munimen fidei R. Isaaci*,” the author comparing (in a comment on Acts viii.) our Saviour to Simon Magus, who deluded the Jews by his enchantments, [בכשפי] adds,—“akin to this is that which is mentioned in the same book, ch. xxviii. v. 3.”‡ —implying that he esteemed Paul, as well as Jesus, to have been an enchanter or magician, and so, invulnerable by the viper; as in that place related. And he afterwards more distinctly intimates this, commenting on the 28th chapter.—“It is plain, that the foolish men who erred concerning Jesus erred concerning *Paul*, so that they called *him* also a *god*.”§ This fully implies, that he supposed Paul (as well as Jesus) to have wrought some wonder, apparently supernatural, which led spectators even to ascribe divinity to him.||

\* Told. Wagens. p. 21, and in B. Pr. p. 130.

† These citations, as the reader is aware, are from a work filled with malignant fiction; yet they conduce to show that it was always understood and admitted by the Jews, that the apostles of Jesus professed the same miraculous powers as their master, and that converts and inquirers accordingly claimed of them the exercise of these powers to authenticate their mission.

‡ In Wagens. tel. Ign. p. 452.

§ Ibid. p. 462.

|| This book is not of high antiquity. It was procured by Wagenseil of a Jew, on the coast of Barbary, in the seventeenth century. But its concessions are no doubt grounded on the traditional opinions of that people.

2. *In opinions or pretexts of Jews, as stated in the tract of controversy.*—In the ancient tract, intituled “Dispensation of the Church and Synagogue,”\* are the following passages illustrating the traditional opinion of the Jews. “The Synagogue said,—thou hast been long imbued with *great magical art* and with false doctrine;”† and again, “The Synagogue said,—O daughter, ever adverse to me; how wonderful thy teachers, sagacious and deceitful, who thus imbued thee with the magical art!”‡

3. *In extant works of heathen writers.*—Pliny the elder lived through the first forty years in which Christianity was preached to the Gentiles. “There is a passage” (writes Bishop Watson,) “in his Natural History, which certainly I think, a very strong allusion to the Christians, and intimates he had heard of their miracles. In speaking concerning the origin of magic, he says, “*Est et alia magica secta, a Mose etiamnum et Lotopea Judæis pendens.*”—There is, also, another faction of magic, derived from the Jews, Moses and Lotopea, and subsisting at present.”—(N. H. lib. xxi. c. 2, Edit. Hardu.)§ The word faction does not ill denote the

\* See ch. ii. vol. i. p. 91, above.

† In Martenne Thes. nov. Anecd. p. 1500.      ‡ In Ibid. p. 1502.

§ “Dr. Lardner and others,” (the bishop adds in a note,) “have made slight mention of this passage, probably from the reading in bad editions “Jamne” for “etiamnum.”—Such is the reading quoted by Dr. L. (Wks. iii. 609;) and in the Leyden Variorum edition, 1668, which does not deserve to be termed “bad,” I find no notice of any other. “Etiamnum,” however, is confidently decided on from the best MSS. by Harduin, and after him by Frantzius. It would indeed have been more candid in Bishop Watson to mention that Harduin himself supposes Pliny here to refer to the Jewish exorcists; yet it seems quite unlikely that they were of sufficient note to be heard of by a distinguished heathen, or to be termed a “faction,” or “sect.” Therefore, I incline strongly to the Bishop’s supposition; still it is questionable, and must be left to the reader’s judgment.

opinion the Romans entertained, of the religious associations of the Christians. Tertullian reckons the sect of the Christians, [inter licitas *factiones*,] among lawful factions; a *magical* faction implies pretensions, at least, to miraculous gifts: its depending from Moses, is according to the custom by which the Romans confounded the Christians with the Jews; and its being then subsisting, seems to have a strong reference to what Pliny had heard of the Christians."—(Apol. p. 54, abridged.) We may add, that as the heathen commonly regarded Moses as a great magician, it was natural that they should ascribe the miracles of a sect, whom they knew to be of Jewish origin, to powers, or arts, descending from that renowned and ancient source.

Suetonius, who lived in the first century, describes the Christians as "a sort of men of a new and magical [maleficæ]\* superstition."† Lucian, relating the connexion of the philosopher Peregrinus with the Christians, and the high esteem in which they held him, says, that "on account of this he was thrown into prison, which itself procured for him no small estimation, as to that way of life, and the *miracle-working*, and ostentation, to which he was much attached." [προς τον εξης βιον, και την τερατειαν, † και δοξασκοπιαν 'ων ερων ετυγχανει.] De Mort. Peregr. in B. pr. p. 228. Lardner supposes, that Peregrinus was imprisoned "in the *time of Trajan*, or of Adrian, at the latest."§ We do not infer from Lucian's

\* See Supplement (B.) to this section.

† Vit. Neron. c. xvi. p. 185. The ancient Scholiast on Juvenal writes, "Nero clothed the magical men, or men given to magic, [maleficos homines,] with combustibles," &c.\* which seems plainly to refer to the punishments of the Christians under that emperor, as described by Tacitus, who says they were burnt like lamps or torches." (Ann. xv. 44.)

‡ See Supplement (B.) to this section.

§ Works, iv. 151.

\* Original in B. pr. p. 183, and in Paley, Evid. I. 41, note.



account, that he had miraculous gifts, or even pretended to them; (for the whole narrative is that of prejudice and calumny;) but the passage contributes to show, that pretensions to work miracles were generally understood to have been part of the claims of eminent Christian teachers, at the close of the apostolic age.

In the dialogue "Philopatris," (which, if not Lucian's, is thought by several learned men, to be of the same century),\* the Christians are styled by Critias, "magical, or conjuring men," [γοντας ανθρωπους]:† and he represents himself, as having said in their assembly, after they had predicted public changes and calamities; "If *prophesyings* and *conjurings* [μαντεια και γοντεια] have persuaded you, your ignorance is twofold." Afterwards he advises them, "Leave these strange visions, [φαντασιας,] and evil devices, and prophecies, [μαντευματα,] lest Jove cast you to the ravens, because ye curse your country," &c.‡ Triphon says to Critias, "Speak, receiving from the Spirit the power of speech."§ Here are evident allusions to the claim of prophetic and miraculous gifts; and the brief incidental style of these allusions, indicates the more strongly the notoriety of the claim.

4. *In citations of heathen authors.*—Celsus says, that "the Christians seem to prevail by the names and incantations (or invocations) of certain demons;"|| and, in another place, that "he had seen in possession of certain elders, who were of our faith, barbarous books, having names of demons and of miracle-working, and that these elders of our faith promised nothing good, but all things for the injury of mankind."¶ Origen remarks on the former passage, "this appears

\* Lar. iv. 153, note d, e. Some annotators on Lucian have placed it higher, in the reign of Trajan, or earlier.

† See Supplement (B.) to this section. ‡ In B. pr. pp. 343—5.

§ Ibid. p. 342, and Lar. iv. 154—6, and see above in vol. i. p. 323, a reference from the same piece to their interpretation of prophecies.

|| Cels. in Orig. l. i. p. 7, Edit. Spenc.

¶ Ibid. l. vi. p. 302, in Lar. iv. 137.

manifestly a calumny; for they do not seem to prevail by incantations, but by the *name of Jesus*, with the *recital of the memoirs concerning him*.\* And this may throw some light on what Origen terms the lies of Celsus, concerning the “barbarous books,” &c. But these passages from a heathen adversary plainly show, that the power of Christians, and prevalence of their faith, in the first age, was commonly attributed to miraculous means, pretended or real.

The same writer designates the first disciples as a society of magicians; “a fanatical woman,—and perhaps some other one among those of the same magical sect [or practice].” [*καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄλλῳ τῶν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς γοητίας.*]†

Hierocles, A.D. 303, writes of “Peter and Paul, and certain others like them;” “liars, uninstructed, and conjurers.” [*γοηταί.*]‡

Julian thus very remarkably describes the apostle of the Gentiles;—“*that Paul, who exceeded all the wizards (or conjurers) and impostors of every place and of every time.*”—[*τὸν πάντας πανταχὲ τούς πῶποτε γοητάς καὶ ἀπατεώνας ὑπερβαλλόμενον Παύλον.*]§ And the same opponent imputes great proficiency in magic to the “apostles” in general: for in referring to the respect paid by Christians to the tombs of the martyrs, he quotes the septuagint version of Isaiah, lxv. 4., and adds, “ye see, therefore, how old this work of magic [*μαγανείας*] was among the Jews; to sleep in monuments for the sake of visions: which it is likely that your apostles after the death of their teacher, diligently practised, and delivered from the beginning to you the first believers;|| and that they wrought magic more skilfully than you, [*τεχνικωτέρον ὕμῶν αὐτοί*]

\* Cels. in Orig. l. i. p. 7.

† Ibid. l. ii. p. 94.

‡ Eus. cont. Hieroc. pp. 512—13, ad calo. D. E. in Lar. iv. 256, note f.

§ In Cyril cont. Julian, l. iii. 100; and see it cited in Lar. iv. 333, and Biscoe Boyle's Lect. vol. ii. 471, and B. pr. p. 180.

|| i. e. to the first believers of your sect and name.

μαγγανισαί], and showed commonly to those who were with them, the laboratories [εργαστήρια] of this magic and abomination.\*

The latter passage appears to refer chiefly to gifts of *prophecy or divination*, which the heathen supposed (or affected to suppose) were attained by the apostles and first Christian teachers, through magical means. We have already seen the same *kind* of pretension variously alluded to in the *Philopatris*; (see p. 122, and vol. i. p. 323.) I shall also venture to offer the conjecture, that this *apostolical* pretension to the gift of prophecy was referred to, and its validity, in some sense, admitted, by Phlegon, (a heathen writer, freedman of Adrian,) in a passage of his *Chronicles*, which Origen quotes from memory. The words of Origen are as follow:—"Phlegon, indeed, in the 13th book, or 14th, I think, of his *Chronicles*, ascribed also to Christ, the foreknowledge of some future events, (confounding them in the things which he relates concerning Peter, as concerning Jesus,) [συντρυφῶν ἐν τοῖς περὶ Πέτρου ὡς περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ,] and testified that the things spoken of happened according to what had been declared by him."†

This passage is obscure, but it seems most likely that Phlegon's statement was founded on some reputed prophecies of *Peter*. The time and circumstances of the predictions, even as noticed by that chronicler, might show that they really belonged to Peter's history, and not to that of Jesus: accordingly Origen, in his parenthesis, has glanced at the mistake: it is more likely also that a heathen of Lydia, writing in the reign of Adrian, should particularly be informed of the acts and sayings of Peter than those of Christ: and yet nothing is more easy to be believed, (by those who have read the inaccurate accounts which heathens give of such matters,) than that he should have "confounded" them, and affixed the

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\* Julian in Cyril. lib. x. cited in B. pr. pp. 180 and 226.

† Orig. cont. Cels. lib. ii. p. 69. See Lar. iv. 58, and B. pr. p. 181, Edit. Spenc.

name of Jesus to the predictions of his disciple. Origen remembered this confusion; but still the testimony of Phlegon was to his purpose: for Celsus denied the *prophecies* of Christ, though not his miracles; and Phlegon, even by his error, conceded that a power of prophesying, proved by events, was generally allowed to the founder of Christianity. But while he thus admits it generally concerning Christ, he states it more specially, though unwittingly, concerning *Peter*; inasmuch as those particulars, which, (though, for want of the book, not cited,) had led Origen to discover his "confounding" of the two, imply also that the reputed gift of prophecy was attached by common fame to the character and time of that apostle.—Or, if this be not granted, and it be thought that Origen merely meant to say that Phlegon had irregularly mingled this observation, concerning the prophetic power of Jesus, in his account of *Peter*, still it must be concluded, that in the account of that disciple, [*ἐν τοῖς περὶ τοῦ Πέτρου*], there must have been a reference to such, or some *other* miraculous pretensions of *his*, in order to give occasion for such a digression;—and above all it may be asked, what could this heathen chronicler, who chiefly wrote of marvellous things, and whose work reached from the First Olympiad, have to do with "the things concerning Peter," except he had to tell of some marvellous powers ascribed to him?—In other words, Phlegon either intended to write "things concerning Peter," or he did not. If he did *not*, and yet named prophecies as delivered by Jesus, which must from their circumstances have been uttered by Peter, or some other apostle; then he shows undesignedly the current accounts respecting the miraculous gifts of apostles. If he *did* mean to write of Peter, then it must have been concerning reputed *wonders* by Peter.—Nor are we to suspect, that the gift of prophesying was accounted by the heathen *less* supernatura<sup>l</sup>, requiring less of magic power, than the gifts of healing, or other wonderful works. Quite the reverse. The heathen esteemed the power of uttering oracles, or prophesying, to be superior to all other miraculous powers of the gods, or demons, or their ministers. The

Christian fathers on this account, argued with them from prophecy, rather than other miracles; and we learn from Origen, in the passage immediately preceding the above reference to Phlegon, that Celsus was unwilling to grant the prophetic power of Christ, "as being a *greater* thing," [*ὡς μαιζον*]; "whereas, while admitting in some sort the fact that he performed miracles, he seems to himself to have stigmatised this fact by the pretence of magic."\* If then the passage of Julian, last cited, (p. 123,) refer exclusively to "visions," or prophesyings, it is only the more strongly to our purpose, since it refers to that kind of supernatural power, which was deemed the "*greater*," and, consequently, its attribution to apostles, implies that they were held to have exercised "skilfully" a "magic" of the *highest order*. We ask therefore, with the Abbé Bullet,—why, if there were no wonders to account for, did he thus exalt them? "Why did he not cut the difficulty at one stroke, by denying that there were such? What does he fear? He can fear nothing else, than to find himself overborne by the evidence of truth, than to lose reputation in the eyes of the world, by rejecting facts, which public notoriety had made incontestable. Thus his fear is a new proof of their reality."†

5. *In more general references to the opinions, or pretences of heathen writers.*—In the Breviary on the Psalter, ascribed to St. Jerome, we find the following reference to Porphyry's way of accounting for the actions of the apostles. "For, thus says Porphyry,—Rustic and poor men, because they had nothing, wrought certain *miracles* [*quædam signa*] *by magic arts*. But it is no great thing to work miracles. For the magicians wrought miracles in Egypt against Moses. Apollonius wrought them, and so did Apuleius. Multitudes have wrought miracles."‡

6. *In oral opinions or pretences of pagans, recorded or referred to by Christian writers.*—Martian, a heathen magistrate, says

\* Orig. cont. Cels. l. ii. p. 69, Edit. Spenc.

† B. pr. p. 166.

‡ Quoted in Lar. iv. 236.

to Achatius, "where are the magicians, the companions of thy art? Achatius answered, we have deserved, and do deserve from God all things" (that we suffer); "but the followers of magic arts we abhor [*sectam vero magicæ artis horremus*]. Martian said,—ye are therefore magicians, because ye bring in I know not what new sort of religion."\* In the Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas, martyrs under Severus,† we read that during their imprisonment "it was dreaded, from the warnings of very foolish men, that they might be withdrawn from the prison by certain magical incantations."‡

Augustine relates, that some unbelievers adduced certain Greek verses, as if uttered by an oracle, "where they make Christ innocent of this impiety" (i. e. of *unlawful* magic); "but they add that Peter effected by magic arts [*maleficiis fecisse*] that the name of Christ should be worshipped three hundred and sixty-five years." On which he thus comments: "Oh ingenious scholars, worthy to believe such things of Christ, since ye will not believe in Christ,—even that his disciple Peter did not learn magic arts of him, but he himself being innocent, yet was his disciple a magician, [*maleficus*,] and preferred that his master's name should be worshipped rather than his own, by means of his magic arts!"—"if Peter, the magician, caused the world thus to love Christ, what did the innocent Christ that Peter should so love him? What gods, in short, are those who can predict such things and not avert them, succumbing to one magician, and one magic crime, &c. For this is not ascribed to any demon, but those verses say that Peter, by the aid of a God, determined these things by magic art."§ It is acknowledged that

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\* Ruinart Act sinc. Martyr. p. 155, partly quoted B. pr. p. 223.

† See vol. i. p. 304, above.

‡ Sect. xvi. in Ruinart, *ibid.* p. 100.

§ Civit. Dei. lib. xviii. c. 53. See also c. 54.

this is entirely confused and absurd, and grossly inconsistent even with what other heathens imagined, as we learn elsewhere from the same father, namely, "that Christ wrote magical books:" where he adds, "some of them by a divine judgment so err—that they say these books were in the epistolary form, addressed to Peter and Paul."\* In the context also of the above citation, the "magic crime" is referred to those atrocious charges brought against the Christians by their early slanderers; yet from even the most vague and foolish of their references to something preternatural, we may surely corroborate the general conclusion, that pretensions to miraculous powers were made by the first propagators of Christianity, that the heathen felt that the prevalence of the religion could no otherwise be explained, and were so impressed with the notoriety of their influence as still to dread their effects. Jerome, writing against Vigilantius, says,—"unless after the *manner of the Gentiles* and of the impious Porphyry and Eunomius, you feign that these are only jugglings [præstigias] of the demons, and that the demons do not really exclaim" (as compelled), "but only pretend their torments."† It may be granted that Vigilantius, and the Arian Eunomius, (if it be he whom Jerome associates with Porphyry,) had abundant reason to suspect the exorcisms of *that* age; but the passage, which, if only from its reference to Porphyry, evidently includes the opinions of a *former* age, contributes its quota of evidence that this *had* been "*the manner of the Gentiles*;" i. e. freely to acknowledge certain wonderful works among Christians, and to ascribe them to some preternatural causes.

Arnobius, in his work against the Gentiles, after affirming that the name of Jesus "puts evil spirits to flight, imposes

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\* Aug. de consens. Evang. l. i. c. 9—10, in Jones on Canon, i. 231.

† Quoted in Lar. iv. 229, note d.

silence on diviners, makes augurs incapable, frustrates the works of proud magicians,"—adds, this happens,—“not *as ye say*, from *horror* of the name” (meaning the horror of hatred, not of fear), “but from the commission of a greater power.”\* Lactantius distinctly notices the same kind of heathen evasion, where, after mentioning the effects of the name of Jesus, and the sign of his passion, on demons and oracles, he adds,—“but they say, that the Gods do not thus through *fear*, but through *hatred* :” on which he ironically remarks,—“but truly it were congruous to their majesty that they should visit those whom they hate with present *punishments*, rather than take flight.”†

This sort of excuses, (which it would have been most ill-judged to impute to Gentiles, in works designed for their conviction, unless they were prevalent,) conduce to show that it had been usual to evade the proof from the miracles of the first ages, *not at all by denying them*, but, on the contrary, by pretexts which all admitted their being in some sense wrought. The story which Theodoret relates of Julian the Apostate’s being alarmed at the appearance of demons, of his resorting in his terror to the sign of the cross, which

\* Quoted in B. Pr. p. 223.

† Instit. l. iv. c. 27, p. 393, Edit. Heuman Gottingæ. The Abbé Bullet thus quotes the original of the former clause.\* “Sed aiunt, hoc Deos non nutu, verum odio facere.” His translation is not close; but the passage, if thus read, must mean, “not through consent, but through hatred.” The evasion and implied admission indeed are the same; but the reading of the Gottingen editors seems much preferable, “non metu verum odio.” In the note they condemn the common reading *nutu*, and state that the MSS. and old editions agree in *metu*.

\* Pr. p. 224.



dispersed them, and his wonder at its power, is probably a mere legend; and yet the saying attributed to his "magician," [ο μαγιστης]—"they were not afraid, as thou sayest, but they *loathed* the act done by thee,"\* is another intimation of the forced solutions to which the heathens had been driven. It was, perhaps, not used on that occasion, but there can be little doubt it *had been* adopted on other occasions; and at this rate of explication, the cure of the demoniacs, or the dis-possession of the Pythonissa, granting them real, could be reckoned no proof of the power of Jesus or Paul, but only of the demon's august displeasure! This may serve as a hint that criticism knows how to dispose of *things* as well as words, and that the edge of a miraculous fact could be turned by a heathen, as cleverly as the point of a stubborn text by a neologist.

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\* Theod. H. E. l. Hi. c. 3. in B. Pr. p. 926.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## B

ON THREE WORDS USED BY THE ANCIENTS IN  
CONNECTION WITH MAGIC.I.—THE WORD *MALEFICUS*.

It suited Mr. Gibbon to understand Suetonius as using this word in the sense of *wicked* and *pernicious*, merely; but Bp. Watson, (Apol. p. 43,) has decisively shown that "magical" (and "magician," when used substantively,) is the more probable sense, by quoting the Theodosian code, (l. ix. c. 26.) "*Magi et ceteri quos vulgus maleficos ob facinorum magnitudinem appellat. Si quis magus vel magicis contaminibus adsuetus, qui maleficus vulgi consuetudine nuncupatur.*" i. e. "magicians and others whom the people call *malefici*, on account of their enormities. If any one be a magician, or used to magical corruptions, who by the custom of the common people is called *maleficus*."

It may be worth while to add, that in the spurious Latin gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate, (which, from its being

ascribed to Pilate as its author,\* we may conclude was written *originally* in Latin,) the Jews are made to say, after describing Christ's miracles, [maleficus est,†] "he is a magician," &c.; and afterwards "they said to Pilate, did we not tell thee that he is a magician? [maleficus]—behold, he hath caused thy wife to dream."‡ It seems undeniable, that had not this been the term in common use, it would not have been here adopted.—It is used also as a generic term for professors of preternatural acts, in the arguments of Pionius concerning the witch of Endor; referred to in pp. 59-60, above.—Lastly, it will scarcely be doubted that St. Augustine well understood the language in which he was so admired a writer; but we have seen§ that he always chose the word *maleficus* to express the character ascribed to Peter when charged by heathens [magicis artibus] with magic arts, and the words *maleficia* and *maleficium*, indifferently with *arte magica*, *artibus magicis*, when referring to the arts or powers attributed to this apostle.

## II.—THE WORD ΤΕΡΑΤΙΑ.

It may well be believed that Lucian and Hierocles would choose either a diminutive, or that, among synonyms, which was most usually applied in a bad sense, when referring to Christian miracles; yet I cannot think Mr. Weston has at all faithfully represented the word of Hierocles [τερατιας,] (as quoted by Eusebius,)|| when he renders it "the little tricks,"¶ or that even Dr. Lardner has been sufficiently close in translating the τερατιας of Lucian "impostures,"\*\*

\* Jones on the Canon II. 403.

† Ibid. 323.

‡ Ibid. 328.

§ Sect. i. p. 127, above.

|| And translated in ch. xii. sect. 2.

¶ Weston on the Miracles, p. 40.

\*\* De Mort. Peregr. quoted Lar. iv. 150.

and the *τερατιας* of Hierocles "tricks."\* Perhaps *prodigies* will be nearest to the *spirit and drift* of these writers; a term which, though neutral in itself, we use for the most part less respectfully than miracle, and with a sort of implication that the wonders are false or exaggerated. Yet the word *τερατιας*; if Eusebius himself understood Greek, has not necessarily, or even usually, any such implication in it, either as a word of depreciation or reproach, for *he* repeatedly applies it to the miracles of Christ. One passage in which he so uses it is in his H. E. l. ii. c. 2, and will be found below, ch. xii. sec. 2, [*αλλας αυτη τερατιας*]; another is in his Dem. Evang. l. iii. c. 6, p. 130, and will be found below, ch. xii. sect. 3, [*τοιαντας τερατιας*].

### III.—THE WORD ΓΟΗΞ.

That this word signifies a professor of occult and preternatural arts or powers, an "enchanter," "wizard," "conjurer," cannot be questioned. Whether considered as really possessed of such powers, or only of secret artifices which induce the appearance of possessing them, neither the use of the Greek word nor its English representatives determine. That must depend on the individual notions of the writer or reader. Marcus Aurelius disbelieved in such powers; but his use of this term in connexion with them, clearly shows what it was understood to mean.† I have frequently adopted the most contemptuous of the English terms, (conjurer,) in translating it; but we are to remember, that even this, which conveys a low and ludicrous idea to modern ears, does so merely because the pretension to such demoniacal commerce is now exploded; originally, it was a word of great solemnity.

"Some dread conjurer, who would enforce nature."‡

"What black magician conjures up this fiend?"§

\* Lar. iv. 256. † See the quotation, ch. xii. sect. 1, below.

‡ Donne (in Johnson.)

§ Shakspeare.

When the word *γοης* is used for an impostor or deceiver in general, it is only by that transfer to an incorrect use, common in all languages, of which our familiar use of the word conjurer, (either as describing a cheat, or in the way of irony,) is itself an apposite instance. Eusebius gives us (from Philostratus) Apollonius's definition of *γοης*. "I say that conjurers [*γοητας*] are falsely wise, [*ψευδοσοφεις*], for with them the things which *exist not*, exist" (in appearance), "and the things which exist, are made to appear delusive." [*τα γοησικα οντα ουκ ειναι, παρ' αυτοις, και τα οντα αποιστα.*]\* The language of Apollonius to Domitian,† which is quoted in the next section,‡ further shows how strongly the term implied a pretension to supernatural powers.—See also Theodoret, p. 130, above.—In the speech of Mæcenas,§ we read, "thou mayst not allow any atheist or wizard [*μητ' αθεω—μητε γοητι*]; and as for magicians, [*μαγευταις*], they must not be at all permitted." On which the annotator observes, "*γοης* and *μαγευταις* are thus distinguished, (by Nonnus, hist. 67 ad Naz.—Suidas in *γοητιαν*, and Niceph. ad Synesium de insomnia,) that *γοης* was believed to be familiar with evil demons, *μαγευταις* with the good;|| but, as he adds, Mæcenas uses the words indifferently, to signify a superstitious diviner, &c. There is another passage in Dion Cassius, which will fully exemplify this mixed use of the terms. Describing Caracalla, he writes,—"but

\* Contr. Hieroc. p. 538.

† Ibid. 537.

‡ P. 148, note.

§ Dion. Cassius, l. 52, quoted above, ch. v. vol. i. p. 181.

|| The words of Suidas are, "Goeteia and Mageia differ. Goeteia is the compelling the dead by invocation, which is so called from the murmurs [*γοωη*] and laments of those about the graves."\*

\* Quoted in Vives Annot. on Aug. Civ. Dei.

in magicians and wizards [μαγοις και γοηται] he so delighted, that he praised and honoured Apollonius the Cappadocian, who had flourished under Domitian, who was accomplished both as a wizard and magician, [και γοης και μαγος ακριβης,] and prepared for him a sanctuary" [ηρωον]. See also the use of the words μαγοις and μαγικην by Justin Martyr, (quoted below in ch. xii. sect. 1,) and of μαγικα by Origen, (in ch. xii. sect. 2.)

## CHAPTER XI.

ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE  
APOSTOLIC MIRACLES.

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SECTION II.

*The claim to such powers certain ; and their reality not discredited either by the charge of magic, or by their frequent inefficacy.*

THERE cannot, I should think, be any mind so irreclaimably sceptical, (or rather of such a talent and turn for *disbelief*,) as to doubt, after the foregoing induction of hostile admissions, that the first propagators of Christianity laid *claim* to miraculous powers, and *appeared* to some to possess such ; i. e., actually wrought certain wonderful works which by many were *taken* for miracles. For it

cannot, by those who have considered the foregoing section, be successfully pleaded, that the Jews or the heathens *carelessly* disposed of this question by bringing in magic, as a last and indolent resource, to solve a sort of hypothetical difficulty about *alleged* miracles; as if they merely said to the Christians who argued from these,—well, *if* (as you say and write) such things were done, or *if* they seemed to be done, no matter; for it must have been by magic or juggling. Such a general answer, even though often repeated, would certainly not *prove* that any wonderful and unaccountable things had been actually done; it would only shew that they had been currently affirmed;—but we shall find, in reviewing those references, whether Jewish or heathen, to the miraculous works of the first Christians, that many, if not the most, are of a cast quite different from this. Some, even of the more vague and slight notices of Christian magic, which of course come nearer to the objector's view of a hypothetical answer than the more circumstantial, are yet quite distinguished from it by this, that they are no answer at all;—or at the most an oblique incidental one, (quite gratuitous,) and not, as far as we can judge, to records or arguments, but to notorious *facts*. When, for instance, Suetonius (writing in the reign of Adrian or Trajan,) briefly characterizes the Christians, as “a sort of



men of a new and *magical* superstition" [maleficæ]<sup>a</sup>, we cannot suppose that he felt himself at all *called on* to answer the argument from miracles. Why, then, if there were no seeming miracles, did he use *this* word?—why not rather an unequivocal term, as "wicked," "impious," &c. But grant only that the first apostles of the Christians were commonly known and admitted to have wrought works which *seemed* preternatural, then his word is most adroitly chosen. It is the better for being equivocal, or susceptible of two meanings. Those heathens who *knew* that such things had been, and that they *were* really very wonderful, would accept the word in its special sense "magical," as the biographer's passing explanation of them: while those who had seen or heard less of the facts, or had been too proud and incredulous to attend to them, or who denied the possibility of *every thing* preternatural, might persuade themselves (like Mr. Gibbon,) that Suetonius was too sensible a man to mean "magical," and could only mean "mischievous." It is but too easy, both in living and in dead languages, to avail one's self of the ambiguity of words, and to attach that meaning which best suits our own previous opinion. Nor is this the first time that writers have been charged with anticipating and minis-

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<sup>a</sup> See Supplement (A and B) to last section, pp. 121 and 131.

tering to that tendency.<sup>b</sup> If Suetonius did so, his skill was not the less for doing it in a solitary word. For the interests of heathenism, and the repose of heathens, the thing could not be too summarily and contemptuously solved and dismissed.

But if we be thought to over-refine on the supposed motive and art of this writer, if he merely noticed the Christians, in passing, without any express design to condemn their pretensions, (which may be the case,) still the question recurs, why did he use the word in common use for magical practices, unless some wonderful things were done or attempted? However careless we may suppose him about the matter, yet unless it were commonly known that the Christians had professed preternatural powers, how came that very epithet to present itself, and to be taken, which was so specially well adapted at once to allude to these powers, and to defame them?

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<sup>b</sup> Some eminent literary men have been used to look for pious artifice, chiefly or only among *Christians*; and not always, it is painful to know, without success. A specimen of it has been given from the the apology of Melito.\* But we may surely look for it more naturally among the worshippers of *Mercury* or of *Augustus*.

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\* Ch. vii. sect. 1, above, vol. i. pp. 274-6.

In the allusion made by Pliny the elder, (if we think he refers to the Christians,) the term used is *not* ambiguous; it occurs also, in that sort of treatise where we should least of all expect any answer to Christian books or Christian advocates, and his calling them a "magical faction" is quite inexplicable, except on the supposition that a semblance of preternatural works was currently ascribed to the sect.

So, likewise, neither Lucian, nor the author of the "Philopatris," was called on by any opponent to speak of "miracle-working," of "conjuring," of "prophesyings and wonderworkings;" but they volunteer (so to speak) the notice and ridicule of these things; than which nothing, as I apprehend, can be clearer proof that the pretension to these things had been notorious. But if these *general* references might suffice to prove the point, how much more those which are precise and circumstantial. If, according to the objection which has been hinted at, the unbeliever merely had recourse to the vague supposition of possible magic, just to rid himself briefly of the argument raised on flying rumours or obscure legends of wonders, then why did both Jew and heathen take the pains to particularize? Why have the Talmuds given, in one instance, the name and residence of a disciple of Jesus, who professed to heal in his name, ad-

mitted in another case the actual though temporary healing, and mentioned, in both, the individuals who were sufferers?<sup>c</sup>

Why was not Hierocles content with styling Peter and Paul "liars and uninstructed," without adding that they were "*conjurers or enchanters?*" Why did the pagans feign or fancy that Christ wrote books containing the arts by which he effected his miracles, and "addressed them as epistles to the same Peter and Paul,"<sup>d</sup> except because those disciples were well known to have been distinguished by extraordinary powers? And wherefore, but for the same reason, can Phlegon be thought to have introduced Peter into his Chronicle? What but the received and undeniable tradition of this with regard to the apostles in general, could induce Julian to attribute to them

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<sup>c</sup> See pp. 117—18, above. Both those narratives, I suppose, are purely fictitious, invented to show the unlawfulness and danger of converse with Christians, and even of being aided by them (for one of the patients is described as dying before his cure, and the other shortly *after*): but, granting this, it rather augments the certainty that there had been clear and conspicuous pretensions to miraculous healing in the name of Jesus, since it was worth while to invent such histories to rebut their influence.

<sup>d</sup> See p. 128, above, and a further quotation below, ch. xii.

“superior skill in magic;” and, above all, what less than the great celebrity of the works of Paul in the countries best known to that emperor, could have possibly inclined him to describe this apostle as “excelling all the enchanters and deceivers that ever existed?”<sup>e</sup> In *what* did he so pre-eminently excel? Was it in learning? Hierocles speaks of him as “uninstructed :”—was it in eloquence, or in those graces of person and dialect which so greatly conduce to it? We have little need to adduce his *own* disclaimer,<sup>g</sup> for the author of the *Philopatris* seems to preclude the ascription of his success to either of these advantages, by depicting the per-

<sup>e</sup> P. 123, above.

<sup>f</sup> *Ibid.*—Jerome, or the author of the breviary on the Psalter, says of St. Paul, “he that makes solecisms in speaking, carries the cross of Christ, and everywhere triumphs,”\* Origen describes him, as “conceiving great things in plebeian language.” [*ιδιωτικῇ λέξει*.]† See also the anecdote of Chrysostom, quoted above,—vol. i. p. 92.

<sup>g</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> Cor. x. 10 ; comp. 1 Cor. ii. 1-4, and Gal. iv. 13-14. If, however, St. Paul was known to be a graceful and commanding orator, distinguished either by imposing utterance, figure, or gesture,—how ridiculous for himself, or the forger of letters in his name, to report it as a common taunt that his bodily presence was weak, and his *speech contemptible*. Imagine such a remark in an epistle of Cicero.

\* Quoted in *Lar.* iv. 236, note.

† *Conts. Cels.* l. iii. p. 122, Edit. Spenc.

sonal defects of the "air-pacing Galilean."<sup>a</sup> Was it then in subtlety or excellence of doctrine? Not surely in the estimation of Julian, who begins his

<sup>a</sup> See above, vol. i. p. 321. "Air-pacing," "ether-treading," are epithets applied in the Philopatris to Paul in particular, and to Christians in general. Though the name "Galilean," could only be applied to his religion, which came "out of Galilee," yet it serves to remind us (in reference to the subject of the foregoing note,) that Paul was a *Hebrew*, brought up in Cilicia and Judæa. Chrysostom says, "knowing only the Hebrew tongue," (of course he means *critically*,) "a tongue derided by all, and especially by the Italians."<sup>\*</sup> Jerome's curious account of the ill effect which Hebrew conversation and study had upon his own *native* Latin, [rubiginem obduximus—stridor non Latinus interstrepit—sordidavit, &c.]† may show how unlikely it was that the scholar of Gamaliel should utter with advantage, (except by a *miraculous gift*,) the languages of Isocrates and Quintilian. The Christian reader also will gain an incidental hint from the surprise of the tribune, &c. Acts xxi. 37—40. With respect to *person*, one of the fathers, (Chrysostom, I think, but can only quote by memory the citation which I have somewhere read,) completes the caricature of the Philopatris by calling the apostle of the Gentiles [τριπνηχυσ ἀνθρωπος], "a three-cubit man." All this, caricature though it may be, is quite incompatible with the supposition that Paul's *magic* consisted in, or was seconded by, dignity of person, gracefulness of utterance, &c.—The reader may do well to make a reference with his pen to this note, in vol. i. p. 207, note d, and so in other instances, where a subsequent passage illustrates any prior argument.

\* In 2 Tim. Hom. 4, q. in Lar. ii. 613.

† See Lar. ii. 534, note a.

treatise by saying "that the doctrine or scheme [σκευωπία] of the Galileans is an invention of men, combined by malice, having in it nothing divine, but abusing the fable-loving, childish, irrational part of the soul."<sup>i</sup> We are *compelled* then to the conclusion, which, indeed, is the only natural one, that when he at once extols and execrates Paul as excelling all magicians and deceivers, he means, not in literature, not in elocution and presence, not in wisdom or refinement; but in the power of persuading by apparent *miracles* or *wonders*.

In short, the apostolic miracles have been mentioned by unbelievers of various nations and tenets; but we do not find that any one, either Pharisee or Sadducee, Epicurean or Platonist, has ventured on the direct and short method of always flatly and simply *denying* them. And so very far from it has been the course of most, that we find the Talmud *specifying* them, Celsus *accounting* for them, and Julian *exalting* the magical skill of those who wrought them. How is it possible, therefore, to doubt that there were "signs and wonders;" or, at least, the pretension to miracles, and the strong *semblance* of such?"<sup>k</sup>

<sup>i</sup> In Cyril. l. 2. quoted in B. pr. p. 165.

<sup>k</sup> "People do not assign a *cause* to facts which they believe to be false; but they *deny* the facts, and prove their falsehood if they have any means of doing it." Bonnet Recherches sur le Christianisme, p. 213.

But when this doubt is removed, or where it has never been admitted, *another* and *more plausible* may perhaps be lurking; namely, that this very way of accounting for and discrediting the Christian miracles, by ascribing them to magical or conjuring arts, (which seems to have been universally thought sufficient, both among Jews and heathens,) does itself induce and justify a particular suspicion, that they were *not* real, but the effects of artifice operating on ignorance or enthusiasm. If this suspicion have any fixed ground, it must, I conceive, be one of these two following; either, first, that miracles which were real and wrought under a divine commission, *must* have been too *great* and *signal* to be colourably ascribed to human or demóniacal artifice: or, secondly, that, as being *clearly good and beneficial*, they could not have admitted such explanations. It will be well to examine distinctly these two grounds of suspicion. First, the notion that miracles which were real, would have been of so signal and unequivocal a character, indicating so great and divine a power, that they, *therefore*, could not have been credibly or gravely ascribed by Jews or heathens to magical artifice, is not difficult of refutation. Indeed, we have already shown the contrary, with respect to Jews, when treating of Christ's resurrection; and the proof that they were wont to ascribe unlimited



or vast potency to these occult arts,<sup>1</sup> is confirmed in the annexed note, which might be amply enlarged.\* If such then were the ideas of Jews, how much more might similar notions be entertained by heathens, whose whole religious system directly favoured and promoted them? It will be evident from the subjoined citations, that not only the poets or the vulgar, but eminent philosophic writers, both of the age when Christianity arose, and of more ancient times, maintained the supernatural and mighty power of demons, and their presidency over magic arts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See ch. ix. sec. 2. p. 52.

\* See Edzard. *Avod. sara.* pp. 319-355. This writer, after describing other Talmudical traditions, adds, "neither is that triumvirate to be thought inferior," (to him before mentioned,) "Raba, Raf Chanina, and R. Oschaja, whose erudition in the magic art had risen to such a pitch, that they could create men," &c.\* He quotes the Talmuds for other absurd particulars of these cabbalistic prodigies. But, indeed, if Maimonides in a more enlightened age, could venture to suggest that the most stupendous miracles of their *own religion* had possibly been wrought by magic,† how can we doubt that this solution might be adopted by Jews, for the most unequivocal miracles of a sect which they hated?

<sup>1</sup> All magical delusion [γυνταία] is wrought through adverse demons; for those who accomplish evil by such delusions, specially honour these demons and their chief. They are full

\* P. 320.

† P. 64, note, above.

The same adversary, whom we have seen at once calumniating and extenuating the works of the

of all phantasy, and able to delude by wonder-working.—Lying is their peculiar work: for they will to be gods, and their presiding power would be thought the greatest god.”\* Eusebius, after citing the passage, has this comment: “he says that evil demons will to be gods, and to have among men the *reputation of the good*, and that their presiding power affects to be the greatest god. But what this presiding power is, he himself also shall declare, affirming the rulers of evil demons to be Serapis and Hecate. But the Holy Scripture, Beelzebub.”†

“They best judge” (writes Plutarch) “who consider the things related of Typhon, Osiris, and Isis, to be not passions or events [*παθή*] of gods or of men, but of great demons; whom Plato, and Pythagoras, and Xenocrates, and Chrysippus,‡ following the ancient theologists, declare to be mightier than men, and with much power excelling our nature.”§

“He is commonly considered a magician, who, (Apuleius writes,) by communion of speech with the immortal gods, is capable of all things which he may will, by a certain incredible power of incantations.”|| “I believe Plato, that there are certain divinities intermediate in nature and place between gods

\* Porph. de abstn. in Euseb. præp. Evang. lib. iv. c. 22, (p. 173.)  
† Ibid. 173—4.

‡ A stoic. Such also were the general opinions of his sect. See Enfield's Hist. Phil. I. 336.

§ Plutarch de Iside, &c. in Euseb. Præp. Ev. lib. v. c. 5. p. 187.

|| Apuleius Apolog. in Weston on Miracles, p. 246, note,

apostles as wrought “by magic arts,”<sup>m</sup> tells us that the demon who presides over these delusions “would be thought the *greatest god*.” So far indeed were the heathen from accounting the sort of miracles which were ascribed to Christ and his followers, to be too *great* for the powers of demons and magicians, that they rather scorned them, (as will be seen in the sequel,)<sup>n</sup> because they were not sufficiently splendid and coercive: because, as Bossuet finely expresses it, “they have more relation to goodness than to power, and do not so much surprise the spectator as touch his inmost heart.”<sup>o</sup>

But this leads us to advert to the second ground of suspicion supposed, namely, that if the miracles

and men, and that these govern all divinations and miracles of magicians.”\* These proofs of the opinions of heathens, as to the power of magicians, and the aid they derived from demons or divinities, are remarkably confirmed by the saying of Apollonius Tyanæus, at his trial before Domitian: “If thou account me a wizard, [γωης] how wilt thou bind me?—but if thou shalt bind me, how wilt thou affirm me to be a wizard?”† The reader may see a larger collection of proofs in Weston on Miracles, ch. vii.

<sup>m</sup> Porphyry, see sect. 1, p. 126, above.

<sup>n</sup> Ch. xii.

<sup>o</sup> Discours sur l'Histoire, p. 229.

\* Apuleius Apolog. in Weston on Miracles, p. 259, note.

† Philost. vit. Apoll. l. vii. c. 34, quoted *ibid.* p. 245, and in Eusebs. cont. Hier.

of the apostles had been real, their *good* and *beneficial* character would have precluded this explanation of them, as wrought by magic and demoniacal influence. This is more specious than the former; but we shall find on examination, and might indeed collect from some passages just now cited, that the vague and flexible system of the heathen fully admitted their attributing works apparently good and benign, and even such as were in their own estimation really so, to the same or a kindred agency. That magic was not always accounted baleful is evident from the elder Pliny,<sup>p</sup> who says that it was first introduced "under a salutary guise, as a more lofty and sacred art of medicine."<sup>q</sup> We find, also, that some distinguished heathens of the Christian era, though they condemned other kinds of magic, approved that which they called *theurgy*; the invocation of superior divinities. Porphyry ascribed to this a certain power of "purifying the *soul*," which is, of course, the highest kind of good.<sup>r</sup> But it is also well worthy of attention,

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<sup>p</sup> See also various authorities for the high respect in which it had been held, in Schleus. Lex. N. T. in voc. *μαγος*.

<sup>q</sup> Nat. Hist. lib. 30, c. 1, quoted in Watson's Apology, p. 53, note.

<sup>r</sup> A healing and consolatory power on the mind is ascribed by Porphyry, in his life of Pythagoras, to the charms and

that the miracles of healing ascribed to Vespasian, were wrought professedly in consequence of "the

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magic of that philosopher. We read of the magic or theurgy of Zoroaster, "by means of which, good demons were supposed to be prevailed upon to communicate supernatural properties and powers to herbs, stones, and other natural bodies, or to afford assistance in other miraculous ways to those who invoked them;\* and it is evident that the word was still used in a respectful sense in reference to oriental people, when Matthew's gospel was writ; where the wise men (II. 1—7—16,) are *magi*. It appears also that the Jews, notwithstanding the prohibitions of the pentateuch, pronounced some kinds or instances of magic lawful. Edzardus, (quoted above, p. 146, note,) cites the Talmud, affirming that the magic of the rabbis there named is "altogether lawful," [prorsus licitum est.]† Nor was this idea of a lawful and beneficent sort of magic confined to the earlier ages of heathenism. Suidas thus explains the term magic [μαγισια], it is the invocation of demons who labour for good [αγαθοποιων], in order to the confirmation of good, as were the presages of Apollonius Tyanæus."‡ And Augustine informs us that "Porphyry promises some sort of purification of the mind by theurgy, though he seems backward and somehow abashed in contending for it. He says it is useful for cleansing a part of the soul—the spiritual," [spirituali,] meaning perhaps the imaginative, "for he says that this, by certain theurgic consecrations, which they call teletæ, becomes competent and apt for the communion [susceptioni] of spirits and angels;—for seeing the gods."§

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\* Enf. Hist. Philos. bk. i. c. iiii. vol. i. p. 50.

† Avoda Sara, p. 320.

‡ Vives. Annot. in Aug. Civ. Del, l. x. c. 9.

§ Ibid.

admonition of the god *Serapis*" to the patients; so that the same divinity whom Porphyry represents as a ruler of *evil* demons (see p. 147), whose rites, when introduced at Rome, were soon abolished on account of their great licentiousness,<sup>a</sup> is represented as suggesting and patronising these miracles of beneficence.<sup>t</sup> And indeed it is obvious, that for evil demons to affect good works, might be interpreted as a branch of their delusions, and quite accordant with their ambition to have "the reputation of the good," and to be accounted gods. From these considerations it is plain, that neither the signal *power*, nor the conspicuous *goodness* displayed in real miracles, would prevent the heathen who had not attentively and candidly examined them, from imputing their performance to theurgical arts,<sup>u</sup> or even to magical and demoniacal

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<sup>a</sup> Lempriere.

<sup>t</sup> Ælian also relates (in his history of animals,) three marvellous cures wrought by this same deity, employing a live lamprey, &c. One of the patients is described as a "devoted servant of Serapis." The passage where these absurd superstitions are recorded is given in B. pr. pp. 310—311, and there quoted as from l. xi. c. 34—5.

<sup>u</sup> The miracles of *Christ* might, though by a highly extravagant fiction, be accounted works of philosophic *theurgy*; as we shall find hereafter (ch. xii. below,) that by some pagans they were. It was *possible* to feign that He, although a Jew, in some way symbolized with heathenism or philosophy;

aids;<sup>v</sup> or to some inexplicable methods of human art and collusion:<sup>w</sup> consequently the reality and divinity of the apostolical miracles is not in the least rendered questionable by such imputations.

In other words, they might be diversely eluded, both by superstitious and sceptical minds; while, at the same hour, their artless majesty and pure benignity—gloriously accordant with the glad tidings which they sealed—were owned by each enlightened and susceptible inquirer, as signatures luminously distinctive and infallibly divine.<sup>x</sup>

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because He had not by his personal labours assailed it. This *could* not be imagined with respect to the apostles, several (if not all) of whom laboured zealously for its overthrow. Their miracles therefore *could* not be viewed otherwise by heathens, continuing such, than as prodigies of *unlawful magic*.

<sup>v</sup> This topic has been partially adverted to already in ch. x. pp. 103—5.

<sup>w</sup> See sect. iii. below.

<sup>x</sup> See the Supplement immediately following.

## SUPPLEMENT.

ON THE MORE GENERAL OBJECTION THAT REAL  
MIRACLES COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MADE  
LIGHT OF.

The particular objection which has just been combated is but a branch of one more deep and comprehensive, which might perhaps be stated by an opponent as follows.

If miracles had been real they could never have been ineffectual: being divinely great and good, none could, under *any* subterfuge, have slighted them. Not only would they have chased or consumed, ere it approached them, that broad libel of magic or fraud which was raised without ceremony before the Christian miracles, but every subtler veil or loftier bulwark which the prejudice or wit or power of man could set up to oppose their heavenly light and power. Had there been *no* charge of sorcery or juggling brought against the Christian miracles, or were we fully to concede that this sort of charge is *not*, considering the then state of opinion, an additional proof of their defective character, still would the great proof of its defectiveness remain—namely, their rejection and inefficacy. Nay, (it might be added,) by laying so great stress on the prejudice and evasion for which those notions concerning magic and imposture gave room, *you* would seem to grant, that, had such not prevailed, real miracles would have



been always efficacious. We, in the meantime, cannot ascribe so much weight to the peculiar influence of these notions. After all the testimonies and comments offered, we still think that had *these* been banished, or had they never existed, some different preconceptions and habits, adverse to truth, would have balanced their absence; but that neither the one nor the other, nor *any* sort of these, could ever have availed against *real miracles*, wrought expressly to seal his own teachings, by the command and impulse of the Almighty. Yet we know, from your own collected proofs, how the professed miracles and the doctrine *were* often rejected and scorned: therefore, we cannot believe that the miracles *were* real.\*

I answer, first, the concession which you intimate was in no degree made. *Thus* much we grant, (and contend for,) that the belief in preternatural magic by most, and the knowledge or persuasion by others of deep impostures under that guise, were *strongly* subsidiary to the rejection of the Christian miracles: but we contend, also, that had there been *no such thing* as magic, or the semblance of it—had the folly, weakness, and cunning of men run in channels entirely different,—there is no reason to judge that real miracles would *then* have been always efficacious. They would not, indeed, have

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\* It should be observed, that this objection *must* not be made by the same persons whom we supposed (pp. 103-4, above,) to argue that miracles would have been *unfit* or *inefficient* means; for the present objection is grounded on the very contrary notion, that they would have been *so fit, so efficient* as never to *fail* of their effect. The truth, we contend, lies *between* these statements, and is, therefore, quite consonant with our view of the Christian miracles as divine, and of their *diverse* reception; but in reality it is the *present* objection which naturally has most hold in the mind. The former, I believe, is comparatively unusual, and of a factitious character; as was there hinted.

been so blindly and boldly slighted, (unless *speculative* atheism had reigned instead of superstition,) but in order to their universally practical and lasting efficacy, there must have been banished something more; and something more deeply seated,—not only the reigning prejudices of this or that age, but the reigning obduracy and corruption of the human heart. We are apt, indeed, to feel as if the rejection of a religion, attested by a miracle wrought before our eyes, were impossible; because we have not either experienced such a temper, or had opportunity personally to observe it in others.

But—have we not seen practical atheism,—neglect of God, —flagrant violations of the law written on the heart, among both the learned and the simple,—before whom, with each rising sun, the miracles of creation and providence are gloriously renewed?

Philo, after describing the smiting of the rock and effusion of waters in the desert, beautifully observes, “If any disbelieve these things, he knows not God, nor ever sought him. Else would he perceive at once and assuredly, that these marvellous and unlooked for works are but as trifles, [θεοῦ παύσια] when he contemplates those which are really great—the production of the heaven, the chorus of fixed and of erratic stars, the enkindling of the solar and the lunar lights, the foundation of the earth, the outpouring of the ocean, the course of rivers and flowing of perennial fountains, the change of revolving seasons, and ten thousand wonders more. But these things, being in truth the astonishing, are contemned through habit.”\*

It is very true that habit is a partial cause of this neglect; and, therefore, sudden miracles (using the word now, to denote such exercises of divine power as are unusual) were of

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\* De vita Mosis, p. 635, Philon. Opp. freely translated and abridged.

great importance to awaken and surprise men into an *attention* to divine truth. But habit is not *all* which makes men practically insensible to the standing miracles of creation. There is a callousness and aversion of heart, a moral repugnance to obey God and conscience, which is a far more potent cause. A "man of honour" beholds the sun rise in all its summer glory, and walks by its light to settle a petty quarrel with his friend at the cost either of murder or suicide; a "man of pleasure," beneath the "lunar light," and the "chorus of the erratic stars," hastens to seduce confiding weakness, or lay waste all the comforts of parental and conjugal affection.

Are we sure that these men would have been turned from their purposes if they had seen the paralytic rising from his bed, or heard the "dumb sing praises," while he who wrought these wonders spoke aloud, (what conscience before was whispering,) "Thou shalt not kill,"—"thou shalt not commit adultery?" They would have been *surprised*, and perhaps checked; but it surely does not follow that they would of necessity have been permanently changed. Novelty, and the surprise which it creates, though they act strongly on the human mind, are not of themselves competent to curb its passions, extirpate its prejudices, subvert its habits and propensities. Besides, they are in their very nature transient. If a comet of unprecedented and terrific magnitude should appear this night, it might have great moral influence, (even *without* attesting any special system of truth); but should it remain unchanged in the sky till this night's anniversary, would the miser still disperse his gold, or the revengeful stay his arm, or the sensualist still suspend his guilty pleasures? The excesses and crimes sometimes committed in the midst of a dreadful *pestilence*, in the very face, as it were, of the angel of death, furnish a more dreadful indication of the hardness of the human heart. But without going to a distance either for suppositions or for facts,

we may ask the reader—if he has passed through a happy revolution of character towards God—was there not a time when neither the miracles of the universe visible before you, nor the miracles of a revelation even then in some sense credited, could move you to the renunciation of evil, or to serious thoughts and desires of infinite good? Nay, are there no seasons, no unhappy moments, even *now*, in which all “the wonderful works,” (the mighty things) “of God”\* fail to impress your spirit, and to conquer your degrading bias towards the things that perish?

These reasonings, as we have already said, are by no means at variance with our belief that miracles were important and necessary to attest and effectuate a revelation, or that they have a natural and powerful effect upon the mind. It would be a strange inference that because an instrument is not omnipotent, it is useless or unfit; that because a persuasive is not of itself all-sufficient, it might therefore be dispensed with; that because the means are not of themselves enough, we should have fewer or none; that because a medicine had no good effect in certain desperate cases, it was therefore not the best, or should not have been prescribed.

Such considerations, however, ought deeply to convince us of the need of *divine influence* to render *any* means lastingly and savingly efficacious. If reason teaches (what the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness, and the rejection of the gospel by many who saw its first attestations, exemplify,) that miracles may surprise and even awe the minds of men, without bringing them to a veneration and love for the truth which is so sanctioned, then how much does it behove us to implore the gift of the Holy Spirit, for ourselves, for the church, and for the world. It would be very erroneous to suppose, that even were miraculous gifts to be renewed, and

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\* τα μεγαλεια του θεου. Acts ii.

missionaries again to go forth armed with apostolic powers, this new and potent instrumentality would *of itself* suffice to change the hearts and lives of men, and bring all nations "to the obedience of faith." Doubtless it would of itself astonish and arrest the minds of multitudes; but still its most truly auspicious aspect, its highest spiritual promise, would be as affording strong ground of hope that it was now, as heretofore, the purpose of the Most High to *accompany* so wonderful an external agency by an internal influence in some good degree proportionate.—For this we should *still* have to pray.\* Surely, then, we are not to neglect entreat-ing it, when the design of Providence appears as yet to be, that more multiplied but ordinary means should carry on the work which miracles began.

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\* As these words are, of course, addressed to Christians, I may add,—Paul, who *wrought* miracles, was sensible that miracles were not of *themselves enough* to convert the world, else why did he urge and entreat his converts at Thessalonica, Ephesus, Colosse, to *pray* for his success in preaching the gospel.\* A miracle, (to invert in figure a miraculous fact,) may force "the iron gate that leadeth from the city," may even "pass" "the second watch;" but to disarm that "first" and sleepless watch, who holds the heart captive against the access of humbling, purifying, liberating truth, this is for Him who wields his own "living" "energetic" word, the all-piercing "sword of the spirit." Do we *doubt* then whether a miracle be any thing, because it is not every thing? Or do we *complain* of this? Why not doubt if rain, and dew, and sunshine be not mere superfluities: because, although our orchards do not blossom or bear fruit without these, they are often unproductive with them; or because we know that when these wonderful means concur, they are still linked with their effects only by the perpetual energy of the great cause? Or why not complain, that throughout creation, a wonderful system of means has been instituted?

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\* II. Thess. iii. 1. Eph. vi. 19. Col. iv. 3—4.

Meanwhile, if it be granted that external miracles are not, in any case, of themselves sure to effect a real and abiding change of moral principle, then since that change was undeniably wrought on multitudes, who renounced heathenism at the cost or risk of all that mankind hold dearest, we draw from such conversions a *separate* argument for the divinity of our religion, inasmuch as a supernatural influence accompanying the outward miracles must have been above all in *their* circumstances necessary, to produce that wonderful constancy and courage with which they adhered to the faith.\* This seems to be the meaning of Origen in the following passage: "The demonstration divinely given to the apostles of Jesus was persuasive by the spirit and by power; wherefore, their doctrine made a most swift and penetrating progress, or rather the doctrine of God, transforming by their means many who were both naturally inclined and habituated to sin, whom no man could have changed by punishing, but the doctrine changed them, forming and modelling them according to his will."†

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\* See Mr. Addison's remark, quoted vol. i. p. 306.

† Orig. cont. Cels. lib. iii. p. 152, Ed. Spenc. The context has been quoted in ch. x. pp. 69-90, note.

## CHAPTER XI.

## ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE APOSTOLIC MIRACLES.

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SECTION III.

*The reality of those miracles further argued.*

It has been lately contended, not only that there was a public claim to miraculous powers by the first teachers of Christianity, and that wonders were apparently wrought; but that neither the ascription of these by unbelieving Jews and heathens to magic, nor the fact of their frequent rejection, under whatever pretext, afford any weighty presumption against their having been real miracles. But we shall attempt somewhat more: namely, to show, that both the claim itself, and the non-detec-

tion of its fallacy, with the vague solution advanced by adversaries, afford most powerful presumptions that those miracles *were* divinely real.

This claim of a few unprotected and hated individuals to work miracles against all existing institutions, is not so slight a thing as some may deem it. Grant the assertion of Porphyry to be in some sense true,—“multitudes have wrought wonders,”—nevertheless will the claim and attempt by men, regarded and situated as *those* were, remain inexplicable, except they really possessed miraculous powers.

The many upholders and agents of idolatry, to whom Porphyry refers, devised and displayed their wonders within the guard of political and priestly power.<sup>a</sup> The pretension could be attended with little or no hazard, where the miracles proposed coincided with the favourite opinions of the people, or where they “were encouraged by those who alone had the power of detecting the fraud.”<sup>b</sup> But how entirely contrary to these were the circumstances of the first propagators of Christianity, whether advancing the pretension and making the attempt among Jews, or among heathens, we can-

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<sup>a</sup> See Supplement (A.) to this section.

<sup>b</sup> Bp. Douglas, *Criterion*, p. 88.



not need to prove. And they must have usually made it among *both* classes of enemies, for Jews were found in all those heathen cities and countries through which they travelled. The position of other pretenders to miracles had been much like that of the Canons of Saragossa,<sup>c</sup> in later days; who could safely allege a mighty work of their saint, with the national inquisition to *back* them;<sup>d</sup> but if we would understand the position of the apostles and evangelists, we should imagine in Spain *two* bodies of inquisitors, Romish and Moorish, and then suppose some unsupported Jews or Waldenses to pretend and attempt the working of miracles in the *face* of *both* these keen and hostile brotherhoods. “It was not, surely, an easy nor a safe matter to conduct, in their circumstances, a system of fictitious miracles. If such a plan were, as seems absurd to suppose, practicable at all, it certainly was a plan overwhelmed with difficulties,

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<sup>c</sup> Paley Evid. i. 355.

<sup>d</sup> “The Papists” (it has been observed by an able writer) “notwithstanding their confessed depth of art and finesse, to execute a well concerted project, have never attempted to do a wonder in the eye of a Protestant nation, before a great concourse of heretics, as they call us.”\*

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\* Seed's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 272.

and pregnant with danger: it was a plan which the importunities of those around him could not prevail on the Arabian *impostor* to attempt;\* a plan, the seemingly unavoidable detection of which must visibly have threatened destruction to the cause.<sup>†</sup>

Nor can it be shown, that this pretension was so *necessary* to their design and character, that, notwithstanding the great risks and anxieties with which it must have encumbered them, they were *constrained* to advance it. We have, indeed, largely argued above,<sup>‡</sup> that the miracles of the apostolic age were necessary to the wide and rapid triumphs which the religion obtained. But if the apostles and their companions were impostors, it is absurd to suppose that such triumphs entered into their design and prospect. Who can conceive that some obscure and hypocritical Jewish sectaries (conscious of a baseless cause, and an utter poverty of means,) really reckoned on shaking all the religious institutions in the Roman empire?—that, by this wild enormity of purpose, feeling that common means could never avail, they were *driven* to attempt miracles, forgetting, amidst all this incre-

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\* See on this subject Pal. Evid. vol. ii. 249-254.

† Evidence of Miracles, Edin. 1802, p. 100, altered.

‡ Ch. x. sec. i. above.

dible comprehensiveness of ambitious forethought, through what multiform and constant ordeals their pretended prodigies must pass? If they were deceivers, it is clear we must believe with Julian, that their original scope and expectation were much more humble and limited.<sup>b</sup> But then there could be nothing in the mightiness of their *design* to drive them on the desperate expedient of attempting fictitious miracles.<sup>i</sup> And, as not in their first design, so neither in their professed *character*, was there any thing to render these most perilous of all pretensions indispensable. I am well aware that the character of *Messiah*, assumed by him in whose name they taught, required that miracles should confirm and distinguish *his* mission. The Jews

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<sup>b</sup> "They never expected that you would arrive at this height of power."—Julian in Cyril, l. vi. p. 194, quoted in B. Pr. p. 370, and Lar. iv. 337.

<sup>i</sup> If it be said, on the other hand, that the narrowness of their first design, and obscurity of their sphere, might favour the attempt at miracles,—be it remembered that although they did not at first aim to visit and convert the heathen, it was impossible they should forget the vigilant heathen government within Judæa, by which their master had been condemned. The two-fold inquisition, Jewish and Roman, surrounded them in their own land: and we may judge of the activity of the Roman, from the proceedings of Felix against impostors, recorded in Josephus Antiq. l. xx. c. 8. vol. iii. 270 and 271, Whiston's translation.

have always *expected* that their Messiah would work miracles,<sup>k</sup> of which this is one proof, that the false Christs, mentioned by Josephus, found it requisite at least to *promise*<sup>l</sup> miracles; perhaps also were desperate or fanatical enough—urged by the false assumption of a character which exacted it—to make attempts at performing them,<sup>m</sup> which contributed to their speedy discomfiture and ruin.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>k</sup> The Targums and Rabbis declare, that “the signs and wonders of the deliverance from Egypt, shall not be had in remembrance, when compared with those in the age of Messiah”—See Raym. pug. fid. pp. 609-10, and B. Pr. pp. 151-2. R. Abravanel, who gives ten marks of the Messiah, has this as the sixth: “His miracles shall be frequent, for he shall kill by the breath of his mouth.”\*

<sup>l</sup> See Bishop Newton’s Dissertations, vol. ii. pp. 259-68.

<sup>m</sup> So did subsequent impostors, who laid claim to the same character. Barchochebas, the false Messiah, in Adrian’s reign, breathed flames from his mouth; and Moses Cretensis, in the reign of Theodosius, promised to dry up the Mediterranean sea; in which some deluded Jews perished. See Bishop Kidder’s Demonst. of Messiah, vol. iii. pp. 392-4.

<sup>n</sup> From these facts, that miracles were expected of the Messiah, and were well known to be so, we might infer that the founder of our religion must have actually undertaken to work miracles, even if we had not a variety of hostile testimony (to be shortly produced) that he did so;—for it is evident that the name and character of Messiah, could not otherwise, with any show of reason, have been ascribed to him.

\* Barn. Hist. des Juifs, l. iv. c. xxvi. t. iii. p. 413.

But the *followers* of Jesus, it is perfectly manifest, appeared in no such character. They announced their *master* as the Christ; themselves merely as the obedient heralds of his coming and his doctrine. It appears, therefore, indisputable, that neither their design, nor their assumed character, laid them under any necessity of venturing on so rash a pretension, which, whatever might be the advantages of its possible success, (if success in their circumstances be thought possible,) would unspeakably aggravate, throughout, the danger and difficulty of their whole career, not only by a perpetual risk of detection, but by bringing on them, in addition to the character of religious disturbers, that of unlawful magicians or jugglers; a character, indeed, to which, on this supposition, none could be better *entitled*. Yet we know that they *did* venture on this pretension. How shall we rationally account for it, except by their consciousness that they could make it good—being “endowed with power from on high?” The improbability of their hazarding such a claim *falsely*, does not materially differ, whether an inquirer regard the miracles and institution of their master as fictitious or as true. If they knew that certain delusive wonders which Jesus had attempted, (for it is impossible to doubt either that he had attempted miracles<sup>o</sup> or that they were

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<sup>o</sup> See last note.

apprized of it.) had neither vanquished the unbelief of his countrymen, nor saved him from a cruel death, what encouragement was there for themselves to venture on *similar* expedients, even had they been confident of equality in skill, not only to him, but to each other?—If, on the contrary, they believed in the divine reality of their Lord's miracles, resurrection, and ascension,<sup>p</sup> it is by me inconceivable, (both on grounds of fear, and hope, and common sense,) that they should *fraudulently* try to eke out a religion so divinely attested, with petty, false, unauthorized prodigies of their own. And it is no less inconceivable that if they made such attempts in good faith, *fanatically* and blindly, there would not have resulted failures at once ridiculous and ruinous.—The sum of the argument is this: a groundless pretension and attempt at miraculous works by persons so circumstanced, would have been in the utmost degree rash and hazardous; they were not forced upon it, either by their primary design, or by their professed character. The

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<sup>p</sup> This latter supposition, indeed, is, in one view, superfluous as it respects the professed *eye-witnesses*; for they could not possibly *believe* those events, except they were *real*: and if they were real, our *chief* argument does not need to be farther pursued. It may, however, be a proper collateral object to show that the apostles cannot be conceived to have wrought *false miracles* in imitation of the true.

knowledge that their leader's miraculous pretensions had been followed by his rejection and condemnation, was of itself enough to awaken every fear, and forbid all rational hope, from such expedients. Therefore the very *pretension* proves that their power of working miracles was *real*.

But further, if we *could* suppose that the pretension might be in those circumstances falsely advanced, still the absence of any *detection* of its fallacy (considering the numbers and resources of those who hated and resisted it,) is a second and independent proof that the apostolic miracles were real. Although we have seen that a belief in demoniacal influence, in magic and theurgy, prevailed widely in the most enlightened ages and regions of heathenism, and even had many distinguished philosophers for its adherents and patrons, it is not to be hence inferred that all magistrates and statesmen, or all philosophic sects, entertained this belief. There were those who had, as Lucian expresses it, "with Epicurus and Metrodorus, an *adamantine* judgment as to these and such like things, so as to disbelieve appearances, and if they could not discover the method, were still persuaded beforehand of this, that there was a method in this magic [*μαγανεια*] which lay hid from them."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Pseudom. quoted by Weston on Miracles, p. 265.

It should be remembered that these incredulous persons were mostly in such stations of society, as afford the best resources for the detection of imposture. The Epicurean philosophy had been embraced by the friends of Cicero;<sup>r</sup> and even he himself, who was opposed to it, yet could deride in some of his writings the sacred prodigies and auguries of that system which he upheld.<sup>s</sup> Those practical and hardy commanders who often filled the offices of provincial magistracy through the empire, were surely for the most part likely, if they were as philosophic as Mr. Gibbon intimates, to be of the less credulous sects; not of that class who would despair of unlocking the secrets of magic by keys of gold or steel. We know, also, that there was among the Jews a Sadducean heresy, strongly allied to the philosophy of Epicurus; and that those who believed “neither angel nor spirit,” and who were usually men of rank,<sup>t</sup> (as Josephus in-

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<sup>r</sup> Enfield His. Phil. vol. ii. p. 27.

<sup>s</sup> After relating a miracle which was said to have given rise to the mysterious art of divination, he derides the story and the art, and adds,—“but I am more senseless than even they who believe such things, for disputing against them so long. The old saying of Cato is already known, who said he wondered that a soothsayer could see a soothsayer without a smile.” De Divin. l. ii. 23-4, Opp. t. ix. 3805-6.

<sup>t</sup> Antiq. l. xviii. c. 1. Whiston iii. 127.



forms us,) could scarcely ascribe the wonders reputed magical to any other cause than human cunning.<sup>a</sup> Now persons of this Epicurean cast were

<sup>a</sup> It is said in the Rabbi Solomon's gloss on the book *Sanhedrin* of the Talmud, that the judges of that court were required to be "masters (or lords) of enchantments [בעלי כשפים] that they might punish with death enchanters confiding in their enchantments." (Quoted in *Pug. Fid.* ii. pt. ii. c. iv. 6. p. 253). It may be doubtful what is precisely conveyed by the term "lords of enchantments." It is probable that the *sanhedrim* was always, in the apostolic age, composed both of Pharisees and Sadducees. Some might regard enchantments as procured by the aid of demons, some as merely human artifices; but the expression implies that they were all by their office engaged to detect such practices, and esteemed capable of doing so: and though the detection would be the more complete if all could be resolved into human artifice, yet the discovery of such *methods* as any other magicians were known to use, would have sufficiently fixed a stain of falsehood and infamy on the Christian sect and doctrine. Origen quotes Celsus, (himself an Epicurean,) thus enumerating the devices and ceremonies of magicians, with an insinuation that those of Christians resembled them: "Why need I reckon up those who have taught lustrations, or expiatory odes, or expulsive voices, or clangors, [κτυπύς,] or demoniacal shapes, of garments, or numbers, or stones, or plants, or roots, and in short, all sorts of curative charms." — "Concerning which things" (subjoins Origen) "he does not claim of us rationally to defend ourselves; inasmuch, as we are not in the smallest degree liable to the suspicion of such practices."\*

\* *Orig. cont. Cels.* i. vi, pp. 301-2. Edit. Spenc.

doubtless among the bitterest enemies and despisers of a religion, that aimed to establish, with new evidence, and by the most repulsive means, the great doctrines which they denied and scorned: they could not but perceive "that the detection of imposture in its miracles would be the completest triumph which enmity could desire; would overwhelm its adherents with confusion, and annihilate the schemes of those successful innovators, who were turning the world upside down. Could this be a matter of indifference to the chief priests of Judæa, who had procured the crucifixion of the founder, and pursued the rising sect with violence and excommunication? Could that be an object of indifference to the Roman government and magistracy, which we have seen how expensively they aimed at attaining, age after age,—even by a series of cruel and bloody persecutions?"<sup>v</sup> Was the discomfiture and disgrace of the Christian cause, by a detection and exposure of false miracles, an object unworthy the diligence and zeal of provincial governors and judges under Nero or Domitian? Was that "magical superstition" too obscure and paltry to be *worth* official research, which in Nero's

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<sup>v</sup> Evid. of Miracles. Edin. 1802. p. 172-3, abridged and altered.

reign had infected the metropolis itself, which in the age of Domitian had seized "a great multitude in many of the Greek and Italian cities," and caused the temples of Pontus to be "almost deserted?"<sup>w</sup> And would the heathen priesthood, versed in the secret mechanism of prodigies, to which they owed their wealth and honour, or would either of those classes, whose interests were closely linked with theirs and with the ancient superstition, be slow to assist in this pious and loyal work?— Could the profusion of imperial bribes, or the power of courtly promises, or that stern questioning of the rack which Pliny did not scruple, or the skill of priests and shrewdness of philosophers, be wanting to the success of such investigations? Were there among the first Christians no "false brethren," none who "forsook them, having loved this present world," none who were accessible by allurements, or by threatenings, and who could give the clue to those delusions which had been practised, by various individuals, and in different scenes?

Yet Eusebius confidently affirms, "Not one disciple of Jesus, in so many years, has been made to appear a magician or impostor, after governors and kings, from time to time, even by trials of tortures, had made exact inquisition into our proceed-

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<sup>w</sup> See ch. viii. above.

ing: so far from being found an impostor, each one was dismissed, in freedom, and out of all danger, who could be compelled to the single act of joining in their sacrifice.”<sup>x</sup>

But if the party of “the adamantine mind”—a term which may express the incredulity of some and the inhumanity of all—were quite unsuccessful, notwithstanding their unrivalled advantages, in their bitter scrutiny, there was another party who (supposing the miracles were not clearly above all rivalry,) should have taken a *different* course. If the stern and dignified *unbelievers* in supernatural arts could not detect and bring to light any *human* deceit, then should the equally proud and not less hostile *believers* in magic and theurgy have caused the miracles of this audacious sect to be *rivalled and controlled*. It is known that some emperors who punished, at times, the professors of occult arts, were yet accustomed personally to consult them. Thus under Tiberius “astrologers and magicians”<sup>y</sup> were banished and condemned; and yet he solemnly consulted the astrologer Thrasyllus.<sup>z</sup> Nero also appears to have discou-

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<sup>x</sup> Dem. Evang. l. iii. p. 128 A.

<sup>y</sup> Tacit. Ann. ii. 32.

<sup>z</sup> Ibid. Ann. vi. 21.

raged the practice of these arts,<sup>aa</sup> and yet his cotemporary, the elder Pliny, relates that "he was as much attached to magic as to the harp and tragic song."<sup>bb</sup> Nor need we explain this by the mad in-

<sup>aa</sup> See Philost. vit. Apoll. l. 4, 35, &c. quoted by B. pr. 393 and 4, and 392.

<sup>bb</sup> And afterwards, "no one ever more expensively patronised any art; and for these pursuits he lacked neither wealth, nor power, nor talent." Pliny further mentions, that Tiridates, King of Armenia, who was brought to Rome in triumph, was himself "a magician," and "had brought magicians with him," and "had initiated Nero in magical suppers." "But," (he adds,) "although he had given him back his kingdom, he was not able to receive from him this art." By which, I suppose, is meant, that Nero did not find himself capable of being a personal proficient, and therefore "relinquished it." Pliny infers the vanity of the science, which he describes "as having certain shadows of truth, but prevailing in these by arts of witchcraft, not of magic." There is no doubt, however, that these "shadows" were often very marvellous and overawing, else that could not be true which this author says in the same chapter. "Magic having seized on men's senses by a triple chain, grew to such eminence, that even at this day it prevails in a great part of the nations, and in the east commands the laws of kings."\* And it is equally certain, that Nero and his successors had the means and will to call into exercise its highest and most costly efforts. It seems to have been a favourite pursuit of several later emperors. Caracalla is said by Xiphilinus to

\* Nat. Hist. l. xxx. partly cited in Grot. de V. R. C. l. v. s. 4, p. 327.

consistency and variableness of those individual tyrants. 'They are not the only despots who have claimed, as their own sovereign luxury and prerogative, pursuits by themselves prohibited to others; nor was there surely that scrupulosity in heathenism, which would have hesitated, where high reasons of state, or the august *religion* of the empire and the progress of a "baneful impiety" claimed it, to use every and *any* means, and enlist the powers whether of demons or impostors for the help and service of the gods. If it were conceivable that the first teachers of the gospel were only magicians, and that yet no one could convict them of collusion and fraud, was it unbecoming the imperial Pontiffs, or their lieutenants and prætors, to summon, (like Pharaoh) other and orthodox magicians, faithful

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have greatly delighted in magicians and wizards, [*μαγιστὰς καὶ γοητοὺς*];\*—his father, Septimius Severus, was "passionately addicted" to the same "vain studies of magic and divination;"† and Valerian was influenced to issue an edict against the Christians by "the chief of the magicians of Egypt," who told him "that he ought to kill and persecute those men who opposed and obstructed his incantations, and then he might be happy."‡

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\* Quoted in Schleusn. Lex. γοης, and p. 135, above.

† R. E. i. 130.

‡ Euseb. H. E. i. vii. c. 10, in Lar. iv. 195.

adherents to the ancient creeds, and publicly confute or confound, by an exhibition of equal or superior wonders, these innovators who deluded the people? How is it credible that if Peter and Paul had been only of the class termed conjurors, the wonders wrought by these Jewish strangers should have excelled, nay, should not have been eclipsed and disgraced by, such as might have been concerted, and brought openly and expressly to confront them, from the conclave of the Platonists, or by the heathen hierarchy of Rome?<sup>cc</sup>

Why did not Julian, in his various efforts to disabuse the impious Galileans, procure to be rivalled by his friend Maximus,<sup>dd</sup> the magic of Jesus and of Paul? If, as we shall see in the sequel, he dis-

<sup>cc</sup> Arnobius justly argues that the low stations and unskilfulness of the first teachers, were meant to obviate the suspicion of artifice. He writes, "When he," (Christ,) "saw that you would be rejecters of his deeds and his divine work, lest there should be a suspicion that he conveyed those gifts and benefits by magical arts, he selected fishers, artisans, rustics, and such unskilled persons, who, being sent through different nations, should perform without any disguises or succours all those miracles which he himself had wrought."\*

<sup>dd</sup> A philosopher and renowned magician of Ephesus, the teacher and intimate friend of Julian, who made him high priest of Lydia. See R. E. ii. pp. 377—8.

\* *Contra Gentes*. pp. 30—32, in *Lar*, ii, 249, note; abridged.

daigned to reckon the "healing of the lame and the blind" among mighty works, it would have been well for a prince who understood "all mysteries," and had all the professors of mysteries at his beck, to show "greater things than these:" or even to condescend to the mean capacity of the Galileans, for their good, by commanding the *like* things to be done; not in "Bethsaida or Bethany," but on the larger theatre of Rome or Antioch. This might have been as profitable to his cause, as the edict which forbade Christians to learn or teach secular literature.<sup>ee</sup> He had a memorable and costly scheme for defeating the *prophetic* proof, by rebuilding the ruined temple of Jerusalem. It would have been quite in the same spirit to control and defeat the *miraculous* proof, by procuring equal or superior wonders to those of Christ and the apostles to be wrought in support of his own Platonic theology.

Why, also, in an earlier age, had not Septimius, or Valerian, who were both strongly devoted to Eastern magic,<sup>ff</sup> and both likewise persecutors, commanded the potent rivalry of occult arts to be combined with the often tried efforts of force?—If the teacher of Peter and of Paul (as we shall find heathens and

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<sup>ee</sup> See Warburton's *Julian* p. 26.

<sup>ff</sup> See note bb, p. 175.



Jews affirm) had prevailed by secreting some of the arts of Egypt, why did not Macrian<sup>ss</sup> urge on the latter emperor to employ "incantations" from the same land, in rivalling the Christian miracles, as well as his sword in punishing those who believed them? Was the third century a more enlightened age?—or were the priesthood of Memphis and Canopus less adepts in miracles than those unlettered Jews, who, with *their* stolen magic, borrowed at second hand, had been able to delude the nations?

It is very true that even a seeming defeat of the Christian pretensions by such means might not have been quite conclusive to discerning minds; inasmuch as the situation, the resources, and the risks, of the victors and the vanquished, were so entirely unequal and contrasted: if Nero, hearing of certain cures reputed to be performed by Paul, had sent a favourite magician to vindicate the honour of the Gods, and prove to the doubting populace the inferiority of the stranger who condemned them, what heathen would have had the courage, and what Christian the opportunity, to inquire rigorously into the wonders wrought by the emperor's envoy? Still, although such a seeming triumph would have been by no means above suspi-

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<sup>ss</sup> "A minister addicted to the superstitions of Egypt." R.E. i. 561, and see above, p. 175, note. The pretence that Christ stole the magic arts of that country, will be seen in various forms in the Supplements to Ch. xii.

cion, it would have had large and weighty influence with a prejudiced people; some *semblance* of a fair and open contest might have been plausibly maintained; and if the wonders of the Christian "magic," (as their adversaries termed it,) had really been at all to be paralleled by those of any other magic, while yet its methods could not be effectually developed, it seems a matter of certainty that such competition would have been instituted, and by dint of vast advantages, must have been successful. That this expedient could have been neglected through contempt or inattention, both by the state and the priesthood, when the new religion was already the subject of imperial rescripts and public severities, and had every where inflamed the feelings of the people, is a supposition quite untenable: yet we find no record or rumour, either of *detection* or of *competition*.<sup>hh</sup> Had there been

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<sup>hh</sup> If it be thought that something of this kind was designed and effected in the cures of Vespasian, (referred to above,)\* and those of Adrian,—I would observe, as to the former, that although some who *reported* these, (and perhaps especially Tacitus,) might wish them to be deemed similar to the Christian miracles, yet there is no evidence of any *original* design, except that of flattering and exalting the sovereign. The means of collusion and deceit are obvious, and Suetonius, in introducing the account of Vespasian's

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\* Sect. 2, p. 150.

even rumours of either, they would surely have obtained, among both Jews and heathens, the widest and most eager currency. "If such objec-

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cures, observes, "somewhat was wanting to give him dignity;" nor can we suppose these miracles were credited and revered, (though wrought by an emperor, and in the city where Serapis was honoured,) when we consider what Dion expressly states, immediately after giving an account of the supposed cures. His words are as follow:—"The divinity by these things honoured him; yet did not the Alexandrians hail him, but even thoroughly hated him, so that they not only in private, but publicly also, both ridiculed and reproached him." [πανυ γυθοντο, 'ωστε μη μονον ιδια αλλα και δημοσια και στωπτειν και λοιδορειν.]\* This was, as he afterwards tells us, on account of unpopular measures; but that an emperor believed to have just wrought *real miracles* under the aid and patronage of their *own favourite divinity*, should become or continue the object of public scoffs and reproaches, is not credible; and the statement appears to me to prove, that the miracles were well understood to be got up for state purposes.

The cures of Adrian deserve still less notice; for his heathen biographer, Spartian, informs us, that Marius Maximus, an earlier biographer, plainly states that there was collusion or pretence in them [per simulationem facta commemoret.]† Had there been in either case a plan for discrediting or eclipsing the Christian miracles, the utmost skill should have been directed to give the appearance of an equality of circumstances, and of course to obviate, as far as possible, all suspicion of deceit.

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\* Dion. Cass. lib. 66, p. 1092, partly qu. Lar. iii. 612—13.

† See *ibid.*

tions had been abroad, the friends of Christianity must either have had an answer to produce, or they must have given up their cause." It would not be credible that not even an allusion should exist to such objections (as we find to be the fact) in the histories or epistles, held sacred by the Christians, or in the apocryphal works of heretics; for, whether those writings were genuine or supposititious, what could be so necessary as to meet or palliate ruinous imputations of imposture?<sup>ii</sup> Still more must they have been adverted to in Christian apologies or defences;<sup>kk</sup> if indeed we can imagine that under such imputations (in any measure just and authenticated) either the religion itself, or the books of its disciples and apologists, would have survived a century. In short, the acknowledged "magic" of the apostolic age was wrought against and among the most powerful and

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<sup>ii</sup> If, indeed, those writers could be supposed to have written, not for their cotemporaries but for a remote posterity, and to have had a prophetic foresight that the records and objections of their powerful and lettered adversaries would perish, and their own works endure, they might have had a motive for not alluding to them: but this is not at all supposable. They wrote for the age in which they lived, and whatever was publicly alleged against Christianity it was indispensable they should notice and combat.

<sup>kk</sup> See Evid. of Miracles. Edin. 1802. p. 156-7.

skilful enemies;—yet we cannot collect, whether from decrees, or memoirs, or controversialists, or any more indirect source, that it was either once exploded by detection, or once controlled by competition;—therefore, the apostolical “magic” was of a kind altogether new.<sup>11</sup> Wonders which could neither be unravelled nor equalled, were confessedly attempted and performed, by men whom all their opponents reviled, as mean, rustic, and untaught.<sup>mm</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The contrast between fictitious and true miracles, is elegantly expressed by a writer of the fifth century, (supposed to be Evagrius) “If the echo is to be deemed equal to the speaker, or the foam to the fountain, or the reflection to the true light, then may the works of men be worthy of comparison with the miracles of God.”\*

<sup>mm</sup> There is a passage in Eusebius which appears to imply that some heathens, without renouncing heathenism, acknowledged the beneficent reality of the apostolic miracles, and gratefully commemorated them. After mentioning that there was a statue erected at Cæsarea, in commemoration of a miracle of Christ, by a Gentile whom he had healed, the author observes, “it is nothing wonderful that those of the heathen who were formerly benefited by our Saviour, should have done these things, when we have seen the likenesses of his apostles, *Paul and Peter*, and indeed of Christ himself, preserved in coloured drawings, as it is probable that some of the ancient (heathen) were accustomed in this manner incautiously to honour them as saviours, according to a

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\* Consultat. Zach. et Apollon. l. i. c. 13, in Luc D’Achery, Spicileg. tom. i. p. 5.

Even if we could account for the "barbarous temerity" of their fraudulent pretensions, which would imply a combination of utter rashness and of dark deceit, still how could we conceive that they would not have been speedily exposed, and baffled, and covered with shame? The only solution is, that in their pretensions they were conscious of a divine commission and divine support, and that in their attempts they experienced its reality: that their "magic" was unaccompanied by the concealments and preparations of that deceptive art,<sup>nn</sup> that they wrought their works in all simplicity, and in open day; and that the benefits conveyed were signal

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heathen custom among themselves." [*ὅτε καὶ τῶν Ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ τὰς εἰκόνας Παύλου καὶ Πέτρου, καὶ αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, διὰ χρωμάτων ἐν γραφαῖς σωζόμενας ἱστορήσαμεν ὡς εἰκὸς τῶν παλαιῶν ἀπαραφύλακτως διὰ σωτηρίας ἐθνικῆ συνήθεια παρ' ἐαυτοῖς τοῦτον τιμᾶν εἰωθότων τὸν τρόπον.*]\*

The passage is somewhat obscure, and I would submit the translation, (and indeed the text,) to critical correction; but the import of it seems to be, that Eusebius had seen among heathens pictures of the two apostles, as well as of Christ, which were of similar design with the votive tablets offered to their own divinities, and preserved in memory of some beneficent miracles wrought on their relatives or friends; "incautiously," because it was not very consistent with firm paganism.

<sup>nn</sup> Sine ullis fucis atque adminiculis." Arnob.

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• H. E. lib. vii. c. 18, p. 265.

and indisputable.<sup>oo</sup> On this supposition, all is consistent. It was convenient and easy for those proud, sensual, and worldly persons, both Jews and heathens, who abhorred the apostolic doctrines and precepts, the humble character of the teachers, and the fate of their crucified master, to refer all these things to magic or artifice. It is also very intelligible why the nature of this magic or artifice was never detected; and it is no less obvious why the professors of that art might prudently decline to

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<sup>oo</sup> It is certain, not only from scriptural and ecclesiastical records, but from the *wide* and *rapid* diffusion of the religion, that the apostles and their companions, its first propagators, must have separated and dispersed themselves. The labourers were few; and it was only by this means possible, even to *attempt* disseminating their faith through so many lands.\* They "separated themselves" (says Bishop Douglas) "to the different corners of the earth; a conduct this which would have been the height of folly, had their religion been built on fraud and forgery. By thus separating, a scheme of fraud must have dwindled to nothing: no regular plan could be pursued, no unity of design could have subsisted. In a word, this conduct renders the supposition of a confederacy absurd; since it put it out of their power to have any number of confederates; for they could not possibly meet with any party, in the cities where they first preached, inclined to support them."<sup>†</sup>

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\* Told. Wagens. above, vol. i. p. 345.

† Criterion, pp. 337—8, abridged.

compete or contend with those “low” “barbarians,” who had no rules or ceremonials, no temples, pomps, or mysteries. We can thus also understand why there was no *forged* record of detection or defeat got up after the death of the apostles: which it would be ridiculous to think the *principles* of heathen priests or emperors would have forbidden. If the miracles of the apostles and evangelists were of a palpable kind, and wrought with simplicity and openness, the facts and the manner of them must have been matter of *notoriety*:<sup>pp</sup> nay, whatever had been their character, the steadfast *belief* of their reality, by some hundred thousand persons, in the first half century, was a fact beyond all dispute.<sup>qq</sup> The truth of Christianity, and that of the apostolic miracles, (since its first apostles confessedly claimed to work miracles,) were two points of which both must be received or neither. It was impossible to believe the religion to be divine, and yet its first missionaries to be impostors. If, therefore, Julian, or Dioclesian, or

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<sup>pp</sup> See Evid. of Mir. pp. 177—8.

<sup>qq</sup> Ibid. p. 88. “And this their testimony,” (observes Bishop Butler,) “is the same kind of evidence for those miracles, as if they had put it in writing, and these writings had come down to us. And it is real evidence, because it is of facts which they had capacity and full opportunity to inform themselves of.—The credulity of mankind is acknow-



Decius, had caused a book or archive to be suddenly brought to light, bearing date in the reign of Nero or Domitian, recording the clear detection of Paul's frauds and jugglings, by Felix, and of Peter's by the Jewish Sanhedrim, and the signal

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ledged; and the suspicions of mankind ought to be acknowledged too; and their backwardness even to believe, and greater still to practise, what makes against their interest."\*

One of the ancient apologists has forcibly appealed to that "cloud of witnesses." "Who *are* they?—perhaps you ask," (he writes, addressing the heathen,)—"tribes, people, nations, the incredulous human race. Had not the thing been public, and in some sort clearer than the light, they would never have given their assent to claims of this nature. Shall we say that the men of those times were inconsiderate, deceitful, stupid, brutish enough, to feign having seen what they never saw? And that when they might have lived with you in harmony and amicable union, they chose gratuitous hatred, and to bear an execrable name? Were they allured by mere assertions, induced to empty hopes, and willing with a rash desperation to put their lives in peril, when they had seen nothing miraculous to prompt them to this new worship? Truly, it was because they saw all these things done by Christ and by his heralds, that multitudes, conquered by the force of truth itself, [veritatis ipsius victæ] gave themselves to God, nor thought it too great a cost to surrender themselves to you for torture and for death."†

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\* Analogy, p. 287.

† Arnobius, lib. i. as quoted in Stillingfleet Orig. sac. pp. 311—12.

triumphs of Apollonius, when at Ephesus, over the feeble magic of "the worthy John," it would have been justly and unanswerably inquired by Christians—how came the rising superstition to *survive* these disgraceful exposures, which (even had the state been dormant) the zeal and industry of pagan and Jewish priests would surely have not been slow to spread, with full and clear authentications, through the empire? How happened the novel sect still unceasingly to grow and strengthen, while the shame of these, its recorded impostures, was so publicly associated with those checks of force and terror, which were used to overwhelm it?"—It is easy to see that general assertions about the superlative skill and efficacy of Paul and Peter's magic, would be abundantly commodious and safe; but when such things, and their extensive *effects*, were notorious to the world, it would have been impracticable, at any period, to ward off the stigma of forgery from a record of their detection or

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" It is probable that Maximin injured the sinking cause of heathenism among those of its votaries who possessed historical information and good sense, when he caused to be published the forged "Acts of Pilate." Where were these Acts, they might naturally ask, (or, if not, the Christians might ask it of them,) in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and Nerva, who favoured the sect, or of Alexander Severus, who paid honours to Christ?

disgrace ; since, if such disgraces had really happened, it was manifest that the vast effects produced, and changes accomplished, must have been either precluded or overthrown."

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" See Supplement (B.) to this section.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## A.

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ON THE BELIEF OF SOME CHRISTIAN FATHERS  
THAT CERTAIN PAGAN MIRACLES WERE PRE-  
TERNATURAL.

It would have been marvellous if the fathers had shaken off all at once the prevailing opinion of their times, (disbelieved chiefly by atheistic sects,) concerning magic and demons. Though they had learned to hate and abjure the demons whom the heathen invoked, it did not follow that they denied their agency; nor are *we* called upon to do so. The question is large and obscure. I own also, that to me it suggests itself, without going back to the age of pythonesses and necromancers. It is difficult to feel that lofty, wild, and hateful genius, that misanthropic derision, which breathes through some licentious godless poetry of our own age, without the idea of a demoniacal inspiration. But granting, as I suppose all protestants will, that the greater part of heathen wonders were the work of *human* artifice, still the fact that the power of the state upheld and protected the deceitful priesthood, fully explains the *non-detection*, and therefore the continued belief, of their preternatural character. And this takes off the point of Mr. Gibbon's grave reflection, "It is seriously to be lamented that the Christian

fathers, by acknowledging the supernatural, or as they deem it, the infernal part of paganism, destroy with their own hands the great advantage which we might otherwise derive from the liberal concessions of our adversaries.”\*

Let us, however, examine a little more closely whether there be so much cause for this “serious lamentation.” Richard Baxter, and some of his cotemporaries, believed firmly in the continuance of demoniacal agency and witchcraft. Had they been resident at Naples, and seen several times the congealed blood of St. Januarius liquefied, they might perhaps have ascribed it in part, if not wholly, to *preter-human* aid; whereas, Bishop Douglas accounts for it by a chemical contrivance, which the position and concert of the priests makes easy.† But if, meanwhile, two or three poor unprotected Huguenots had appeared at Venice or Madrid, and while inveighing against the corruptions of the Romish church, had in all appearance restored circulation to the hands of several paralytics, not far from the hall of the inquisition, if many conversions had followed, and if certain nobles and archbishops had in writing denounced these men to posterity as “unrivalled wizards,” who had successfully attacked the true faith by the help of evil spirits,—admitting both by silence and by these statements, that neither church nor state, police nor inquisitors, had shown their miracles to be unreal, or detected any fraudulent art—I ask, would the erroneous concessions of our countrymen *destroy* the inference to be drawn from the “concessions” of their “adversaries?” In the first case, the wonder-working friars are many; the secular authorities are all on their side; their church is armed with “all appliances” of power and skill; while the hostile observers are checked by force or fear, unscientific men, and so far from being able to examine the matter narrowly, that they themselves would stand in jeopardy for the

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\* R. E. c. xvi. note 138.

† Criterion, pp. 250—4.

least sign of heretical distrust. In the second case, the peril and exposure are all on the side of the few heretical wonder-workers, not at all on that of the powerful and skilful observers. Art and science are at the command of the inquisitorial witnesses. Bribery and torture not less so.

The inquiry is not whether the proof of real miracles would in the second case be *complete*, from such non-detection and concession by enemies. That is not at all maintained.\* The true question is, whether our belief that in the first case the notion of supernatural agency was erroneous, should lead us to infer that it was so in the second; whether, because such an error was easy in a case where *no* means whatever of detecting artifice were possessed, it would likewise be easy in a case where *all kinds* of means for this were at hand.†

The real drift of Mr. Gibbon's indistinct insinuation appears to be,—deceptions might pass for miracles in a credulous, superstitious age. This we readily grant where they are practised with and for the stronger party; but not surely where they are against the ruler, the priesthood, and the public feeling. A superstitious age, abounding in like deceptions, will in one respect be better able to cope with such attempts than a sceptical age; for who so prepared, or so interested, as the licensed and graduated deceivers themselves, to investigate, and unmask, and explode the arts of their hated opponents?

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\* There are several other constituents which make up the proof of the apostolic miracles; such as the fact of Christ's resurrection—the circumstantial, contemporaneous, uncontradicted *history* of some of these miracles—the epistolary *appeals* concerning them—the *effects* known to have been produced:

† Eusebius also testifies how diligently, in the case to which we would apply the comparison, the means were used. See p. 172, above.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## B.

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ON THE CONFIRMATION AFFORDED BY THE APOSTOLIC MIRACLES, AND EVEN BY THEIR CLAIM OF MIRACULOUS POWERS, TO SOME PRIOR ARGUMENTS.

We may revert first, to the argument pursued in the preceding chapter,\* and resumed briefly at the commencement of this; namely, that a succession of other miracles, besides that indispensable *one*—the resurrection of the founder, were beforehand probable, as being in all appearance necessary to the triumph of the religion. We now return to that point with an accession of force to strengthen and defend it, from having subsequently shown the *admitted pretension and attempt* of the first propagators of Christianity to work miracles. We could then say, it does not appear credible that the religion should have so triumphed through the apostolic age without a succession of true miracles; but we have since ascertained that there *were* professed miracles, which, if not true, must have been false. We can now

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\* See ch. x. sect. i. pp. 81-98.

therefore say, it is still more incredible that this religion, in the face of all its bitter, subtle, and powerful enemies, should have so triumphed, notwithstanding the hazardous display of *false* miracles. If it were highly probable *before* examination of what the first teachers actually professed or attempted, that they must have had miraculous gifts, it becomes doubly so when we have ascertained that such gifts were *claimed* and *displayed* by them. It is inconceivable that the more skilful should have hazarded a false claim and display of this kind, still more that they should have permitted their less gifted colleagues to do so. Failure would have been direct disgrace and ruin to their cause, while the absence of such claims would have been only a negative check or disability.

Nor is this the only point of our past reasonings which we may hence return to corroborate; for having now ascertained, (as I hope,) though merely through the dark medium of heathen and Jewish admissions, that real miracles were wrought in the apostolic age, we add not a little (as was before suggested)\* to the weight of previous proofs for the resurrection of Jesus. That event indeed I judge to have been so far proved, at least as that no candid mind can *disbelieve* it; but belief has many degrees, and no source of confirmation should be neglected. If, then, we cannot disbelieve (after this review) that the first *followers* of Christ were divinely commissioned and empowered to work *miracles in his name*, much less can we believe that he, in whose name, and for the propagation of whose cause, these miracles were divinely authorised and performed, remained in the grave after a servile and shameful execution, with the stigma of imposture and impiety unremoved. The reality of the apostolic miracles, if it has here been *separately*, although but partially shown, not only quadrates with prior

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\* Ch. ix. sect. 3. Supplement, pp. 73-4.



conclusions concerning the need of such means, but affords a strong corroborative proof that Jesus must have been "raised from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God with power." Nay more, as was above stated, the undetected *pretension and attempt* of the first disciples, even if the reality of their miracles were not satisfactorily inferred, would itself afford a powerful presumptive proof of their master's resurrection. To my mind, indeed, (as I have already stated,)\* it is not credible that if they knew or believed their Lord to have risen, they would have attempted any miracles fraudulently; or unreal miracles fanatically, without incurring ruinous failure: but it is doubly incredible that if they had known the *contrary*, or even had not known with certainty that their Lord was "risen indeed," they should, for a mere fable or a questionable fact, have voluntarily courted this augmented peril, this complex, unnecessary, and degrading risk; the risk of being put to shame and consigned to suffering, not merely as hostile to the national faith, but also as sorcerers and public impostors.

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\* P. 167. above.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

#### SECTION I.

#### *Introductory remarks; and Jewish admissions of the preternatural works of Jesus.*

THE results aimed at in the whole foregoing course of testimonies and arguments may be thus summarily recalled.—The characteristics of Christianity show it to be no human fiction.—For its rapid propagation in the first century of its era, some supernatural means were requisite.—One signal miracle, the resurrection of its founder, was indispensable, and did truly happen.—Subsequent miracles were really attempted and wrought

in his name by his first followers.—Their very *claim* to miraculous powers peculiarly strengthens (by its great hazard) the argument which we derive from their wide successes in propagating the faith; and also powerfully confirms the great fact that their master was indeed risen.—By those who deem our conclusions sound, the divinity of the religion cannot be denied. But there is a class of similar testimonies remaining, which will serve, at least, to connect and corroborate these previous proofs, and to give a further coherence and consistency to our account of the rise of the religion. For we have, as yet, not inquired, whether our Saviour, before his crucifixion, had himself wrought miracles. It was indeed remarked,\* that if Jesus *claimed and undertook* to work miracles, and if the similar claims of his apostles were *genuine* (as it has been since argued that they certainly were), much more must this be believed concerning those of their leader. But it is desirable to show, from the testimony or admission of *enemies*, that the founder of our faith *did* make such claims, and was, even by themselves, believed to have (in some way) wrought such works; for miracles by the founder during life, and his resurrection from death, are events which conduce to substantiate each other.

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\* Ch. xi. Sect. i. p. 113, note.

It would be highly improbable that a messenger from heaven, who was afterwards raised from the grave, and whose servants and worshippers were subsequently empowered to work miracles, should not have introduced and attested, by equal or even greater miracles, his own commission;<sup>b</sup> and, conversely, if it appear that he did so, the highest probability is added to the fact of the resurrection, as the seal of prior wonders, and the renewed attestation of that mission and authority which an infamous death might have sufficed to invalidate. But, moreover, the proof that Jesus himself wrought miracles, will contribute to account more fully for the firm hold and rapid spread of his religion in the land where his life had been passed,<sup>c</sup> and in the circumjacent countries.<sup>d</sup> If, for example, during the public years of that life, a power of miraculous healing was exercised, the witnesses for Christ's beneficent miracles, as wrought on *themselves*, might far exceed in number even the wit-

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<sup>b</sup> The argument of Augustine to Volusian, cited below, (Sect. 2, Suppl. (E.)) may perhaps, with a slight change, apply as well to this case, as to the prior miracles of the prophets.—Christ also willed to do the like things, lest it should appear unfit, that what he was *about to* perform by others,\* he had not himself performed.

<sup>c</sup> See vol. i. pp. 344—6.

<sup>d</sup> See Supplement (A.) to this Section.

\* Original "*quæ per illos fecerat.*" Quoted Lar, iv. 486, note d.

nesses of his resurrection ; and the genuine marks of grateful veneration and love for their benefactor, which we cannot but suppose would often strikingly characterize the oral testimony of such, must have greatly deepened the impression of its veracity.<sup>c</sup> Such persons could not be regarded by the inquiring Jew or heathen with the same suspicion as the active and gifted leaders of the sect. Their employments might continue entirely private and obscure ; their dwellings might be remote from each other, and the occasions which drew forth their personal narrative quite incidental. If Jesus miraculously healed “ the lame and the blind,” and led that unfixed or itinerating life with which Celsus has most coarsely reproached him,<sup>f</sup> who can doubt, that, from the very frequency of those evils, and the eagerness which would be felt for their removal, his cures must have been *numerous*?<sup>g</sup> Thirty

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<sup>c</sup> This is one of several reasons why miracles of *mercy and kindness* are especially suitable as attestations of a system of beneficent truth.

<sup>f</sup> In Orig. l. i. p. 47, Ed. Spenc.

<sup>g</sup> We have argued above, (ch. ix. sect. i. pp. 9-18,) that many of the first converts or inquirers must have visited Judæa, to scrutinize the evidence of our Lord's resurrection, &c.\* To such persons these incidental and diverse memorials of his power and beneficence would be next in value to the

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\* See also vol. i. pp. 316-17. and Appendix ii. there referred to.

years after the crucifixion, without supposing *any* providential extension of the lives of such persons, there might be *still many* surviving of those who

confirmation of that great fact. We learn that "Quadratus, who wrote his apology for Christianity about A.D. 124, affirmed that there were persons alive in his days upon whom Christ had wrought miracles; and it is very probable that some of those who were cured of their infirmities, and raised from the dead by our Saviour, were preserved by Providence to an extreme old age, to be living witnesses of his power and goodness." Jortin's Remarks, vol. i. p. 261.

The passage of Quadratus is in these words:—"The works of our Saviour were always present or obvious [*αἱ παρῶν*], for they were real: they that were healed—they that were raised from the dead—who were seen not only when they were healed or raised, but were also always present [*αἱ παρόντες*] not only whilst the Saviour dwelled here, but also after he was departed;—were so for a long time [*χρόνον μακρόν*], inasmuch that some of them have reached to our times."\* Eusebius introduces this quotation by saying, "the writing (of Quadratus) is possessed by very many of the brethren, and indeed by ourselves, from which conspicuous proofs appear both of the author's understanding, and apostolic soundness of faith."† If we consider that St. John lived to the reign of Trajan, and that Quadratus was probably an elder when he wrote his apology, and is called by Jerome, (see Lar. iv. 53, note,) "a disciple of the apostles," it will appear highly credible that (as Jerome supposes,) he had "*seen many such persons who had been healed or raised.*"

\* In Euseb. H. E. l. iv. c. 3, p. 116, quoted in Lar. iv. 53—4.

† Ibid. in ibid. l. 436, note.

had been the subjects of this healing power, and whose collateral testimony would be eminently valuable to the confirmation of the apostolic message, and the propagation of the faith.

For these reasons, as well as some others, which may be afterwards suggested,<sup>b</sup> it is worth while to adduce and examine certain admissions of enemies as to the miracles of Christ. In the present section I confine myself to those made by the Jews, from whence, as annexed in the supplement,<sup>i</sup> we collect the following. (1.)—In the 'Talmud it is repeatedly declared that Jesus seduced the people, by preternatural powers; secretly obtained in Egypt, and not existing elsewhere. (2.)—The Jewish traditional memoirs ascribe his acquisition of these powers to an unlawful procurement of the ineffable name of God; and state his use of them in healing the disabled, cleansing the leprous, and raising the dead. (3.)—Some ancient controversial books of the Jews against Christianity admit quite as fully that Jesus wrought wonders, but argue that he could not be thus possessed of the Divine Name, and anxiously

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<sup>b</sup> That is, as indirectly corroborating the truth of the Christian scriptures and inspiration of their writers, which points, although no where assumed in this volume, and no where necessary to our argument, are, of course, in themselves highly important.

<sup>i</sup> See Supplement (B.) to this Section.

endeavour to show, upon various grounds, that his wonders must have been the effects of magic and enchantments; thus decidedly assuming the existence of those works respecting the *causes* of which they debated and differed. (4.)—These admissions by the *Jews* of the fact that Jesus wrought wonders, with an ascription of them to some preternatural but unlawful power, are likewise mentioned by the author of the Koran; by Justin Martyr and Tertullian in the second century; by Chrysostom in the fourth; by Agobard and Alphonsus in the middle ages; and by an intelligent traveller in the east, two centuries ago. (5.)—Most of these Jewish accounts, and those of the Talmud in particular, relate the great influence which these miracles had with the people; while some expressly affirm, that Jesus was condemned on *account* of them.



## SUPPLEMENT.

### A.

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ON THE TESTIMONIES OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN  
THEMSELVES THE SUBJECTS OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES,  
AS CONDUCTING TO ACCOUNT FOR THE  
RAPID SPREAD OF THE FAITH .

We are prepared to contend, and now more strongly than when discussing the general obstacles,\* that all the means which can be justly adduced are not too many or too great to explain that phenomenon ; for it has been since admitted, that even the report of miracles, those striking and super-human means, might itself be, to prejudiced and careless minds, a check or impediment.†

I may seem indeed, at first view, to be falling below a paradox, when this admission is adverted to in the same sentence which intimates the need of still more miracles, in order to explain adequately the *reception* of the gospel. But perhaps

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\* In chapters iv—vii.

† See ch. x. sect. ii. p. 105.

a supposed case may remove the seeming self-contradiction; showing that reported or recorded miracles might at first produce a distaste and contempt of Christianity, and yet, in the very same mind, additional reports of miracles, (less signal, perhaps, but more remarkably attested,) might produce respect and serious inquiry, if not belief.—Marcus Aurelius tells us in his meditations, “Diognetus cautioned me to disbelieve what things are said by miracle-workers and conjurers [γονιτωρ] concerning incantations, and expulsion of demons, and such like things.”\* Let us imagine that Aurelius had lived, and been thus cautioned, in the reign of Nero or Galba, and been posted as a young officer in Syria with his legion; that he had heard of the resurrection of Christ, the founder of the Christian sect, and of certain miracles wrought in those countries by Peter, John, or James; it is highly probable that under the impression of the early admonitions of Diognetus, he would have classed these things with idle tales, beneath the notice of a philosophic mind; and that this very connexion of miracles, judged to be fallacious, with the Christian doctrine, would have created in him a peculiar prejudice against it. But be it farther supposed, that certain Christians are at that time cited and convicted as such before the president of the province, and that Aurelius is directed to superintend their execution, or their safe conveyance to prison:—that among these he observes two aged persons, with whom he is prompted to expostulate; and asks—‘Why thus rush ‘like the forlorn hope’ on death, or a bondage which to you may be more severe than death, for the sake of trivial or uncertain tales?’ Imagine the elder confessor to reply—‘Oh, Roman chief! thou knowest not the strong ground of my resolve. In my youth I was a wretched leper, an outcast from my people; and Jesus the Christ removed by a word that loathsome

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\* See Original (De Reb. suis, l. 1, sec. 6,) quoted Lar. iv. 80, note.

malady. My companion was then afflicted with blindness; but, at that same hour, a touch from the great teacher suddenly restored his sight. Wouldst thou have us deny Him, Oh Roman, to whom we owe the best earthly benefits, or doubt that the Friend of the suffering, who did so much for us, (and for multitudes beside,) could now deliver us from bondage if he pleased, and will, as he promised, raise us up from death?—Suppose his associate to confirm all this with grateful tears, and that both then advance to the stake or the dungeon with calmness or with smiles. We should wrong the Stoic if we thought that after an incident like this, he could regard as *contemptuously* as before, either the alleged resurrection of Christ, or miracles of his followers. It is indeed, too possible, that this incident might only make the young tribune thoughtful for a day; but who can say that it would lead no bystander, no centurion, no legionary, to seek and believe the words of life eternal?

## SUPPLEMENT

## B.

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ON THE JEWISH ADMISSIONS THAT THE WORKS OF  
JESUS WERE PRETERNATURAL.

Of these I find the following:

1. *In extant Jewish books.*—The tract Sanhedrin of the Talmud, (fol. 107—2, &c.) states “Jesus wrought magic [קסם], seduced, and caused Israel to err.”\*

In the tract Schabbath, (fol. 104—b,) we read—“Did not the son of Stada bring enchantments out of Egypt in an incision which was in his flesh? For he could not have brought them out written in a book, because the magicians examined all who departed, lest they should carry out enchantments to teach them to other nations.”†

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\* In Lar. iii. 553—4, note e. and in Wagens. Conf. T. J. p. 12. The last word is the same that is used concerning a false prophet's supposed power with the people, in Deut. xiii. 6, which our version renders “thrust thee out of the way,” &c.

† Wagens. Conf. T. I. p. 17, and Lar. iii. 554, note d. Stada, or Satda, was a name of reproach given by the Talmudists to the mother of Christ. (See Sanhed. fol. 67, in Lar. iii. 556, note d, and 557, and Wagens. ubi sup. p. 15.)

In the tract Sanhedrin, (fol. 43, a,) it is written that the execution of Jesus was proclaimed to be "because he dealt in sorceries [שכישוף], seduced and instigated Israel,"\* (or caused Israel to err.)

In the Toldoth of Wagenseil we read—"Jesus went to Bethlehem Judah, his birth-place, and declared 'I am the Son of God,' &c. And they said 'Give us some sign and wonder, to show that thou art God.' And he said, 'Bring me hither a dead man, and I will restore him to life;' and they hastened and dug in a grave, and found there dry bones only; and he said 'Bring them into the midst.' And he took them and joined the several bones, and covered them with skin, with flesh, and with nerves, so that it rose and stood upon its feet and lived."†

"The people being filled with wonder at the sight of this prodigy, 'What,' said he, 'ye wonder at this—cause a leper to be brought, and I will heal him.' When a leper was brought he healed him on the spot, pronouncing at the same time the ineffable name."‡ The inhabitants of Bethlehem, struck with these wonders, "prostrated themselves before him, and adored him, saying, truly thou art the Son of God."§ Afterwards it is related that he wrought like prodigies in Jerusalem before Queen Helena, "cleansed a leper instantly by putting his hand on him, and pronouncing the ineffable name;" and "raised a dead body to life in the

\* Lar. iii. 556, note c. and Wagens. Conf. T. I. p. 19. Part of the passage is quoted above, vol. i. p. 81.

† Told. Wagens. pp. 7—8.

‡ The ineffable name is described in this book as engraved on a stone in the Holy of Holies: and magically guarded; but Jesus, having by magic, and the aid of demons, entered, and copied the ineffable name, securing it in an incision of his flesh, was enabled by this to work miracles. See the abridged Toldoth Jeschu, in B. pr. p. 122, and Told. Wagens. p. 6.

§ Ibid. p. 8.

same manner.”—“How dare ye to affirm,” said the queen to the wise men, “that this man is a magician? Have I not seen him with my own eyes work miracles like the Son of God?”\* After this the elders are represented as engaging Judas, to possess himself also of the ineffable name, by which he rivals the miracles of Jesus. It should be remembered also, that they are referred to in a passage already quoted from the end of the same book,† as matters of notoriety; where the Nazareans propose this test of apostleship—“perform the prodigies which Jesus performed when he was living.”—After the death of Jesus, the wise men renew their assurance to the queen that “he was verily an enchanter.”‡

The other Toldoth, (published by Huldric,) relates, that “Jesus changed the name of one of his disciples, Juchanan, to Juhanus, on account of the miracles [הנסים] which Jesus did in his presence by the secret name :”§—“that all the inhabitants of Ai believed on him, for the prodigies [המופתים] were numerous which he wrought in their presence by Shemhamphorasch :”||—that “the priests said—Grant us only this, to work wonders before our face. Jesus therefore wrought wonders [נסים] before them by the unutterable name :”¶—that “the design having been formed

\* Told. Wagens. p. 11.

† Ch. xi. p. 118, above.

‡ Told. Wagens. p. 19, and see B. Pr. pp. 124 and 128.—It is observable, that the term of reproach here used [מכשף] is the same as in the passages above cited from the Talmud: whereas, in the subsequent extracts from the Toldoth of Huldric, various words are applied to the works of Jesus, which Moses applies to divine miracles.—(See Numbers xxi. 8, 9—xxvi. 10. Exod. vii. 9. Deut. vi. 22.) But whatever kind of words be used, they all alike describe the fact and performance of mighty works, while their inconsistency betrays the falsehood of their authors.

§ P. 36.

|| P. 43.

¶ P. 68.

of apprehending Jesus at Jerusalem, his host was gained over, who gave him medicated wine, by means of which he forgot the ineffable name, otherwise he could not have been seized."\*

In the Jewish memoir published by Raymond Martini, a similar story of the mysterious name (Schemhamphorasch) is given, and certain youths are introduced, saying to Jesus,—“‘If thou art the Messiah, show us a sign.’ ‘What sign,’ he answered, ‘do ye ask of me?’ They said to him, ‘Make a lame person to stand as we do.’ He replied, ‘Bring him unto me.’ They brought therefore immediately a lame man, who had never stood upon his feet. He said over him Schemhamphorasch; and in that same hour the lame man rose and stood upon his feet. Therefore, they all bowed before him and said, ‘This is, doubtless, the Messiah.’ They brought therefore to him a leprous person, and he spoke the name, and placed his hand on him, and instantly he was healed.”—Afterwards the wise men say to the queen, “In the hand of this man is sortilege, (or magic,) and he makes the world to err.” But the account of miracles is continued. “Also, that impious one made a dead man to revive by Schemhamphorasch. In that hour the queen was profoundly astonished and said, ‘Truly, this is a great sign.’”†

Other fictitious miracles are attributed to Christ in this book, such as causing a millstone to swim, &c. which are represented as at last controlled.

In a Jewish book against Christianity, entitled, “Nizza-chon,” (victory,) and which Wagenseil ascribes to the twelfth century, the following comment is made on Exod.,

\* P. 56. See this last extract in Basn. H. des J. l. iv. c. 28, t. iii. p. 436.

† Pugio fid. Pars. ii. cap. 8, sect. 6, pp. 290—1, and in B. pr. pp. 137—40.

viii. 7. "And the magicians did so with their enchantments."—Hence Rabbi Abraham, the proselyte, collects that Jesus by no means possessed the Schemhamphorasch; for behold, not even in the age of Moses, which was most holy, were the secrets of that mystic name made known, how much less in a later age is it likely that they should have been ascertained. Truly, the things which Jesus did, he did by enchantment (Heb. by the hand of enchantment); for it is written in the gospel that he spent two years in Egypt, and there he learnt the art of enchanting. Whence we say, (in Kidduschin, f. 49.) 'Ten measures of enchantments have descended into the world; Egypt has taken to itself nine of them: one was left for the rest of the earth.'\* The same book thus comments on Exod. xxxiv. 29—35, respecting the shining of the face of Moses. "How much more, therefore, must this be believed concerning the divinity itself, and that it was fit the face of Jesus should diffuse its brightness from pole to pole. Yet he was not indued with any splendour, but was entirely like to other mortals. Wherefore it is plain that we are not to believe in him, and that all his works were enchantments. [כי כל מעשיו כישוף היו]† Another part of this Jew's reasonings is as follows:—"As therefore we see no miracles of his in childhood, but he spent that period in the manner of all other children, we have no trust in those which he wrought when adult, but account them to have been done *by the hand of enchantment*, and to have been such as enchanters, diviners, and wizards have wrought."‡ And again,—“Wherefore did he defer those marvels [נפלאות]§ to adult age, and till he had attained

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\* Tel. ign. Niz. Vet. p. 34, quoted B. pr. p. 141.

† Ibid. p. 41, partly in ibid. p. 142.

‡ In Ibid. pp. 91—2, quoted in ibid. p. 142.

§ The same word which is in the original text of Exod. xxxiv. 10, and which is used by Joshua, (iii. 5.) just before the miraculous passage through Jordan.



the use of reason? He should have wrought them two or three years after his birth; so would the whole world have believed in him, and he would have avoided the sentence of judgment. Therefore, it is to be believed that he was a wizard, and that all his marvels were wrought by the hand of enchantment. *For which cause* he was capitally condemned, as equity and law demanded.”\*

Perhaps, many readers will be chiefly struck with the puerility of these reasonings; (which, however, to those in any degree acquainted with the Talmuds and the Rabbis can produce no surprise;) but I think some inferences may be drawn from them, which the Abbé Bullet, by whom the greatest part of the above passages are quoted, has not suggested.—1. We have here a Jewish writer of the twelfth century referring to another of prior date, (possibly *much* more ancient,) “Abraham the Proselyte,” who had contended that Jesus did not work his miracles by the Schemhamphorash. This proves that the tradition of the “ineffable name” as the source of his miraculous power was current before the publication both of the Toldoth Jeschu,† and of the memoir preserved by Martini; and was probably of very ancient date. Nor can any thing, except the *greatness* and *notoriety* of the wonderful works of Jesus, be conceived to have induced the ancient Jews to invent *such* a solution, which is in fact ascribing those works to a power *properly divine*,‡ though, by a monstrous fiction, it is represented as surreptitiously obtained.—2. We see here that Jewish writers disputed or differed among themselves by what *means* the miracles of Jesus were wrought. Those who were ashamed of the attribution

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\* Tel. ign. Niz.Vet. p. 239.

† See Supplement (A.) to Introduction.

‡ Many of the Jews have affirmed that their own great prophet and law-giver, wrought his miracles by virtue of this Divine Name inscribed upon his *rod*; that thus the Red Sea was divided, &c. See Vandale de Idolol. pp. 492—3,

of them to the virtue of the Divine Name, had recourse to magic; and the writer of this book, with reason, thinks the whole mass of "Egyptian enchantments," "the nine-tenths of all the magic on the earth," and the combined powers of "enchanters, diviners, and wizards," not too much to account for his "wonders." Nay, he says that Jesus was, "for this cause, on account of his wonderful works, condemned to death." But had there not been a *constant and uncontrollable* tradition among the Jews of the wonderful works of Jesus, how absurd these disputes and declarations. For in that case, what could have been more simple and obvious than at once and invariably to affirm,—his *disciples invented and forged* the accounts of miracles which are contained in the Gospels.

Dr. Gregory Sharpe has remarked,—“neither Jew nor Gentile ever thought of *denying the miracles*. The dispute of old between them and Christians was *not* concerning the facts, but the *cause*.\* This, with respect to the heathen, may not be correct universally; but, as it regards the Jews, it might have been added,—such also was the dispute or difference between *themselves*;—which is still more material; inasmuch as it assumes still more unequivocally the existence of those facts or appearances, for which causes are assigned or sought. If it be conceivable that a Jew or Gentile, pressed by a Christian, might sometimes prefer contesting the cause rather than the facts, just because he saw his adversary so rooted in the latter,—it is certainly not conceivable that two Rabbis should differ, whether the wonderful works of Jesus were wrought by the name of Jehovah, or by enchantments, unless it had been first notorious and undeniable that wonderful works *were* wrought. Why perplex themselves, and betray their embarrassment, by inventing and contradicting modes of explanation for that which could have simply been denied?

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\* Christianity Defended, p. 33.

*In anonymous pretexts of the Jews, as stated in the Koran.*—We do not adduce Mahomet (in the subjoined passages) to vouch for the *reality* of Christ's miracles; for he not only comes too late, but is a suspected party; since "it was his usage through the whole scene of his imposture to flatter the Christians."\* It is, however, well worth observation, that unless the personal *claims* of Christ to work miracles had been quite established, by strong concurring evidence, through the East, there would have been an obvious temptation for Mahomet, who has frequently, in the Koran, charged the Christians with corrupting and altering the gospels, to denounce the accounts of the miracles, or a part of them, as among those corruptions. He might still have extolled Jesus as a great and holy prophet, but, by denying his miracles, or insinuating that they were exaggerated, have sought to bring him nearer to his own level. But, inasmuch as both Jews and pagans, in some sense *admitted the fact* of the miracles, Mahomet could not deny their divinity without degrading Jesus from a prophet to a *sorcerer*, which would no way have suited his policy towards the *Christian* world.

Our direct object, however, is only to show—from this as from other sources—the pretexts of the Jews; which are stated in the two following places. In the chapter (V.) entitled "of the table," the Almighty is introduced thus addressing Jesus,—“Son of Mary, remember thou my grace to thee—I strengthened thee with the Holy Ghost—thou didst cure the born blind and the leprous, and didst revive the dead—I delivered thee from the Jews, when thou didst preach to them my commandments, and wroughtest miracles which the wicked *affirmed to be magic and enchantments*.”† In the chapter (LXI.)—"of battle array"—it is said, "When he" (Jesus) "came with miracles, reasons most intelligible, and arguments

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\* Prideaux's Life of Mahomet.

† In Jones on Canon, vol. i. pt. 2, Appendix, p. 573.

infallible, they said that he was a magician. Who is more impious, than he that blasphemeth against God?"\*

In anonymous pretexts of *Jetes*, as stated or referred to by Christian writers.—Justin Martyr, after enumerating Christ's various miracles, (as fulfilments of prophecy,) thus reminds the Jew Trypho of the manner in which his unbelieving countrymen had from the first eluded them.—"But they even beholding these things done, said that it was a magic-vision, (or phantasy,) [*φαντασίου μαγικῆς*] and dared to call him a magician [*μαγῆν*] and deluder of the people [*ἀποστροφῆς*].†

Chrysostom, in an exposition of the 8th Psalm, says respecting the Jews,—“And if thou shalt ask them—for what cause did ye crucify the Christ, they say—as being a deceiver and a wizard [*γοηταί*].” Quoted in B. p. 144.

Agobard, Bishop of Lyons, in the ninth century, already twice quoted,‡ states, that the Jews read “in the books of their ancestors,” of Jesus as a “detestable magician.”§

\* In *ibid.* pp. 578—9. The Latin version of Maracci is probably more literal. “Et sanabas cæcum a nativitate et leprosum ex concessione mea, et cum educeres (e sepulchris) mortuos ex concessione mea, et cum cohibui filios Israel a te ne occiderent, cum venisses ad eos cum *demonstrationibus miraculorum*. Et dixerunt, qui increduli erant ex eis,—*Si est hæc nisi magia manifesta*.” (Sura v. p. 236.) “Postquam autem hic venit ad eos cum evidentibus argumentis, (*Sale's* version here is “evident miracles,”) dixerunt, *hæc est præstigium manifestum*. Quis autem est iniquior quam qui confingit de Deo mendacium?” (Sura lxi. p. 719.

† Just. M. Dial. Ed. Thirlb. p. 288.

‡ See Ch. ix. sect. 2, p. 57.

§ Opp. Paris, 1666, p. 76, quoted in B. pr. p. 146.

Peter Alphonsus, a converted Spanish Jew,\* composed a dialogue in Latin, between a Jew (whom he names Moses) and a Christian (Peter). Moses thus speaks—"The Jews put Jesus to death because he was a magician, and by magical art led the children of Israel into error." And further on—"Truly, our doctors say that he learned it in Egypt."†

In the travels of Mr. Sandys in the Holy Land, (folio, 1610) he thus relates a traditionary tale told him by Jews in Palestine:—"They confess our Saviour to have been the most learned of their nation, and have this fable dispersed among them concerning him, how that yet a boy attending upon a great Cacam" (this means חכם, sage, or teacher,) "at such time as the heavens accustomed to open, and whatever he" (i. e. the great teacher) "prayed for was granted,—the sage oppressed with sleep, charged the boy when the time was come to awaken him. But he, provoked with a frantic desire of peculiar glory (such is their devilish invention) made for himself this ambitious request, that like a god he might be adored amongst men. Which the sage overhearing, added thereunto, (since what was craved could not be revoked, that it might not be till after his death—whereupon he lived contemptibly; but dead, was, is, and shall be honoured unto all posterity. They say, withal, that he got into the Holy of Holies, and taking from thence the powerful names of God, did sew them in his thigh. By virtue whereof he went invisable, rid on the sunbeams, raised the dead to life, and effected like wonders. That, being often amongst them, they could never lay hands on him; until he

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\* Moreri states, that he had Alphonsus, King of Arragon, for his godfather, in A. D. 1106.

† Quoted in B. pr. pp. 148—9, from tom. xxi. Grande bibl. des Peres de Lyon.

voluntarily tendered himself to their fury; not willing to defer his future glory any longer.”\*

*In appeals to the Jews by early Christian writers.*—Tertullian, in his treatise addressed to the Jews, tells them that it had been prophesied the Messiah should perform various and signal miracles; as cures of the lame and blind, the deaf and the dumb, and others “which,” (he adds,) “not even you deny that Christ has wrought” [quæ operatum Christum nec vos diffitemini].†

\* Book iii. p. 147. It is obvious that the recency of the period at which this story was told by Jews of Palestine to our countryman can be no presumption against the antiquity of the tradition.

† Adv. Judæos, c. 9, in B. pr. p. 143.

## CHAPTER XII.

ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE MIRACLES  
OF CHRIST.

## SECTION II.

*Heathen admissions concerning Christ's wonderful  
works.*

It was remarked, in an early part of this work,<sup>a</sup> that few heathens, if any, whose writings would be published or preserved, were likely to have had a personal knowledge of our Saviour. Their acquaintance with his reputed miracles, as well as with his character, must have been derived either from the official communication of Pilate, or from

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<sup>a</sup> Ch. iii. sec. 2. vol. i. p. 120.

the accounts of the military stationed in Judæa, or from those of the Jews themselves. When we consider, therefore, the secondary character of their information, together with the reluctance naturally felt to introduce the topic, (of which more will be said in the sequel,) we shall not expect that references to Christ's miracles, by persons who continued heathens, would be frequent or distinct. We acquire, however, from the passages quoted and illustrated in the annexed supplement,<sup>b</sup> some general view of those heathen admissions, differing in degree and in spirit, which were made concerning the wonderful works of Christ. Thence, it appears, that the notions of heathens on this subject, were, to say the least, twofold; or that they admit of one marked division: namely, into those of a class who viewed our Saviour's works as *theurgic*,<sup>c</sup>—i. e. wrought by a divine magic, or honourable commerce with the gods or good demons,—and those of another much more zealous, who denounced them as *goetic*,—i. e. wrought by an unlawful commerce with evil demons;—and therefore criminal, or at least utterly unworthy of respect.

In the former class, we must place the Emperor

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<sup>b</sup> Supplement (A. B. C. D. E.) to this section.

<sup>c</sup> What the heathen meant by *theurgy* has been already explained in ch. xi. sec. ii. pp. 149—151, above.



Alexander Severus, and probably several other emperors; perhaps, also, the procurator Pilate. The Platonist Amelius likewise belongs to it; though indeed, from the peculiar manner of his reference to the person and works of Christ, he may be supposed to have entertained much higher views of his divine character than the rest. With these must be united the unnamed pagans referred to by Augustine.—But this whole class were unlikely to appear in controversy. They could not, as heathens, become public and professed apologists, even partially, of the religion or its author, without being either stigmatized as secretly receiving it, or charged with inconsistency for *not* doing so; they were, besides, as their opinion and practice show, whether from comparative honesty, or vicious indifference, moderate; or what Dr. Lardner quaintly designates “low-church Gentiles:”<sup>d</sup> their opinions were counter to the strong current of heathen interest and bigotry, and finding it against them, they were not very likely to do more than defend themselves if attacked.

In the second and opposite class, are naturally

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<sup>d</sup> Works, iv. 21. He thinks that those may have been of this temper who were brought before Pliny, but who denied that they were or had been Christians, and were accordingly discharged.

found all the controversialists; men who from the strong prejudices of heathen learning, or superstition, or vice, combined often with bitterness of temper, were disposed to blacken to the utmost the sect and its founder. Nor was it difficult for them, by the surmises of a worldly scepticism, or the notions of a mystic and fanatic philosophy, to interpret the most wonderful works as the product of unlawful arts, human or preterhuman.

Here therefore we meet the leading adversaries of the first ages, Celsus and Porphyry,\* Hierocles and Julian. The notions of Celsus, which are first examined, may be considered (from the form in which he presented them,) as a compound of Jewish and heathen evasion. He states the powers of Jesus to have been such, that their professor, on account of them, announced himself as a God, and that in Judæa: which assumption of divinity is the grand object of this philosopher's assault; who, "frequently" conceding that certain wonders were

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\* In the citations of Porphyry I have found nothing explicit on this subject; but from what he has said of the apostles' magic, we certainly may infer that he took the same view of the works of Jesus. (See p. 126, above.) The Abbé Bullet, however, writes, "He attributes to magic all the wonders that Jesus performed," and refers to Cyril cont. Julian. l. vi. This passage I have not been able to find as yet in the work of Cyril.

wrought by the founder of our faith, labours to degrade them to the level of magical feats, and thus to refute the inference that he who performed them was the "Son of God." Hierocles adopts the same line of argument, censuring the Christians for giving divine honours to Jesus on account of "certain prodigies," the occurrence of which he does not at all deny, but which, he contends, do not, if real, entitle their exhibitor to adoration, and may have been produced, as he intimates, by the illusions of magic or sorcery.

We find, also, the Emperor Julian using his controversial pen in the same indirect and insidious manner; *depreciating* the miracles of Christ, as not having been magnificent and unequivocal like those of the great Jewish lawgiver; as having failed to convince his own kindred; and as rather of a lowly, private, and simple character, than mighty and overpowering.

We learn, farther, that this same method of desecration and depreciation, generally pervades the anonymous objections of the controversial heathen, as they are recorded by Justin and Arnobius, and also as referred to by Volusian and others: in a later age.

This latter class (and especially the well-known writers at the head of it,) are open enemies, from whom any the least concession as to Christ's mira-

cles was manifestly extorted only by the strength and pressure of testimony.

On the other hand, the admissions of the first class, (which cannot be strictly termed hostile) whether conveyed in words, or by conduct, or by silence—to which last we shall further advert in the sequel—have a different kind of value. Such neutral or half-friendly admissions, whether verbal or tacit, as did not lead to a change of religion, and thus left the parties clear from all suspicion of a new bias, have a force *sui generis* which appears to me peculiarly great.<sup>f</sup> But to consider what may be inferred from the different kinds of concession, cited in the present and foregoing section, will be a principal object of that which is to follow. The admissions of the *Jews*, however, will be then most rested on, as being a grand *source* of the notoriety attaching to the wonders wrought by Christ, wonders of which their own country had been exclusively the scene.

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<sup>f</sup> This has been already urged in the case of Josephus. See vol. i. pp. 110—11. His case is there termed *singular*, and, in several of its circumstances, certainly is so; but those which we have now noticed, and others which remain to be mentioned, will appear in some respects closely allied to it.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## A.

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ON THE DIFFERING VIEWS OF HEATHENS CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

It is certain that heathens differed among themselves, (and this more essentially than Jews,) concerning the *character* of those preternatural powers or means, by which the miracles of Christ had been wrought; and this difference deserves examination. Those, who like Alexander Severus and others,\* were candid enough to respect his unblemished virtue and eminent wisdom, in all likelihood ascribed his works to the more honourable or *theurgical* magic,† while they chose rather to ascribe to his *followers* than himself that spirit of uncompromising hostility to other religions, which was the great object of their aversion, and one great check to their reception of the gospel. There is a remarkable,

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\* Ch. iii. sect. i. vol. i. p. 112—18, and ch. xi. sect. iii. p. 182, note.

† See ch. xi. sect. ii. p. 151, note u.

and indeed decisive intimation of this, in the notions of some heathens, as cited by Augustine.—He writes, “I have first to discuss what some” (pagans) “inquire,—why we bring forward no writings of Christ himself?—For they will that he should be believed to have written I know not what, which they *esteem*; and to have had no dislike to their *gods*, but rather to have adored them with a *magic ritual*, and that his disciples not only spoke falsehood concerning him, (saying that he was the god by whom all things were made, when he was nothing else than a man,) but also that he did not teach concerning their gods that which they” (the disciples) “had professedly learnt from him.”\*

In the same treatise he mentions that they spoke of certain imaginary or fictitious writings of Christ, “in which were contained those arts whereby they suppose him to have wrought the miracles.”† The report of such writings may have been, at first, pretended, by false apostatizing Christians, who wished to excuse a relapse into paganism; and well received by such pagans as from conscience or interest, or affection, wished to keep terms with Christians;—it was well adapted, if the whole genius of the religion, and all its authentic writings, had not resisted and belied the glaring fiction, to amalgamate Christianity with all that was evil, and reduce it to be the degraded associate of unnumbered base superstitions. It is one amidst many proofs of its heavenly origin, that it has come down to us uncontaminated, amidst such insidious attempts to make it coalesce with “art and man’s device.” But our chief object, at present, is to observe, that this class of heathens, who imagined or were *willing* to imagine that Christ had “adored their own gods with a magic ritual,” and that “by these arts he wrought his miracles,”

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\* August. de Consens. Evan. quoted in Jones on the Canon. i. 233—4.

† Ibid. in *ibid.* p. 231, partly quoted above, p. 128.

evidently thus ascribed to him the honourable kind of magic, or theurgy; and showed a degree of respect to him, and to what they had extravagantly feigned or fancied his religion; while they hated and scorned the pure and anti-idolatrous faith which he had really founded, and to which his real followers rigorously adhered. These considerations may render more probable the proposal of Tiberius to the senate, made before the repulsive or dissocial character of Christianity was understood; and may even explain the much later procedure of Severus.

There was always a sort of heathens who would not have refused to Christ an apotheosis and a temple, although they reckoned him, like Apollonius, only "a man favoured of the gods." Their grand quarrel with the Christians, it is true, was, as we have seen, not because they ascribed miracles, but Deity, to Christ. But then it was the *exclusive* character of this Deity, its subsistence in the one Godhead, which implied the nothingness of all their own divinities, that moved their indignation, and was reviled by them as the presumption of his followers.—Grotius, after noticing the attempt of Tiberius to mix Christianity with Paganism, adds, "of which utterly heterogeneous things, Adrian, Severus, Heliogabalus, afterwards tried to effect a mixture, but in vain."\* This feeling is illustrated by a question of Emilian, the prefect of Egypt, to Dionysius and his brother confessors: "Who forbids you to worship this god also, if he be a god, *together with* them who are by nature gods?"† intimating that Christianity might have had toleration if it would have entered into alliance with heathenism.‡

\* Ad Matt. xxiv. 11, q. in Lar. iii. 605, note b.

† Eus. H. E. l. vii. c. 11, q. in Lar. iv. 195. The context is quoted above, vol. i. p. 200.

‡ See on this subject Div. Legat. bk. II. sect. 6, vol. i. p. 300, Ed. 1742.

There is extant one instance, quite anomalous, of an apparently full recognition of the personal dignity of Christ, and the divine character of his works, by a philosopher who yet was noted for devout heathenism. It is that of the Platonist Amelius. He is described by Porphyry as an "exceedingly laborious" student, a "lover of sacrifice [*φιλοθυτης*]" and stately observant of rites and festivals;\* yet he is quoted by Eusebius (who says that he writes "his expressions exactly") as describing the "word," or "logos," a term used by that school to express a manifestation of Deity,—and then adding,—“whom, by Jupiter, the barbarian declares or judges [*αξιου*] to have subsisted in primeval order and dignity with God, by whom absolutely all things were made, in whom every thing living had life and being, and to descend among bodies [*εις σωματα πιπτειν*] and having put on flesh to appear a man, *with the shewing forth, even then, of the grandeur of his nature* [*και τα τηρικλυτα διικνουει της φυσικως το μεγαλειον*], and truly that when dissolved [or departing, *αταλυθιντα*] he was again deified, and was God, such as he had been before he descended to body and flesh, and man.”† On this passage Dr. Lardner observes, “I suppose that all will agree with Eusebius, and other ancient Christian writers, that, by the ‘barbarian,’ Amelius means the evangelist John,—whom he so terms as being a Hebrew.” And he thinks, that by “the display of the grandeur or majesty of his nature,” the philosopher must intend “the great works performed by our Lord.”‡ It is difficult, indeed, to interpret the clause otherwise than as referring to these. It would seem, likewise, that this Platonist not merely admitted the fact of our Lord’s miraculous works,

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\* In vit. Plotin. See Lar. iv. 200, notes.

† Euseb. Præp. Evan. p. 540, q. Lar. iv. 200. The same passage of Amelius is quoted also by Cyril and Theodoret.

‡ Lar. iv. 201.



but owned in him and them a character strictly divine. For had he subjoined any remark disapproving John's testimony as to the *incarnation* and *ascension* of the Logos, it is very improbable this should not have been adverted to by either of the three Christian writers who have quoted him: especially as it would have afforded a still clearer proof of what Eusebius (needlessly) argues, that it was John to whom he referred. This then seems to afford an instance that it was possible to admit the miracles of Christianity, and even a divine dignity in its author; and yet, from a strong prepossession in favour of philosophic dogmas and heathen rites, not to admit the exclusive claims of his religion. If we would class this Platonist with other heathens, it must of course be with the Emperor Alexander Severus, and those unknown persons whom Eusebius relates to have had pictures of Christ, and his chief apostles, as *Saviours*, (i. e. as temporal deliverers or Saviours, by certain superhuman powers,) but the fact is that, though he is on their side, he stands apart and beyond them. His case seems to have more resemblance than other known instances among the gentiles, to that state of mind which we have attributed to *Josephus*, and to which we shall again advert.

Probably, had we more access to the history of individual and tacit opinions in those ages, many would be found who were thus "not far from the kingdom of God," who owned the majesty of Christ, but were guided by preconceived opinions; of whom it may be said, in reference to his works, as well as words, that "they marvelled, and left him, and went their way."\* May not these facts sug-

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\* Alexander Severus commanded that our Lord's precept, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also so to them," should be engraved on his palace and public buildings. (See Lamprid. q. in Lar. iv. 178.)

gest to us also the probable explanation of some dubious instances, as that of Chalcidius, and the Emperor Philip,—where the disputed point has been,—were they Christians or heathens? We know that there were philosophizing Christians: why not also Christianizing philosophers—men who admitted the miraculous facts, and some of the mysterious truths, but tried to mingle and enslave them in the train of their own speculative and practical errors. If, with a desire of being Christians *indeed*, we are conscious of not having *yet* fully learnt the lessons of our Lord and his apostle,—“How shall two walk together except they be agreed?”—“What concord hath Christ with Belial?”—we shall not wonder (though we shall lament) that some heathen emperors and philosophers, say that many of every rank, in every age, have tried and are trying, “to cement what cannot coalesce.” [τα ασυνακτα συναγει].\*

It may be right also here to notice the same historian's account of the conduct of *Pilate* concerning our Saviour's miracles. His reference to Tertullian on that subject has been noticed above,† but his *own* account which precedes that reference, and was probably derived in part from other sources, is as follows:—“The wonderful resurrection of our Saviour, and his assumption into the heavens, having become publicly known to most, an old custom having prevailed among the heathen governors to signify the novel occurrences in their province to him who possessed the sovereign power, so that none of these events should escape him,—the things concerning the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, already reported to all throughout the whole of Palestine, were communicated by Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius, as having heard also of his other miracles [ως τας τε αλλας αυτη πιθομενος τερατειας]; and that after death, being

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\* Euseb. quoted below, p. 276. † Ch. li. vol. i. p. 89.

raised from the dead, he was now believed by the many to be a god.\* Pilate was certainly not a man at all likely to *avow* his belief in Christ as a God, until he found the letters patent of apotheosis regularly granted by the emperor and the senate. He was quite of the character to accede to the rule satirized by Tertullian: "Unless a god pleases man, he shall not be a god." And yet he might be, as the same writer affirms him to have been, "in *conscience* a Christian;" and might not have hesitated to record our Saviour's miracles; since this, according to heathen notions, would not include an obligation to accede to or profess his religion, while yet it *might* procure honour from the state for one whom he secretly dreaded or revered.

This account of Eusebius agrees also with that of Justin Martyr, who, in his first Apology, having mentioned our Lord's healing diseases and raising the dead, adds, "And that he did these things, you may learn from the Acts made under Pontius Pilate."†

These, then, form one class, admitting indeed great varieties of character and opinion. Though we should err in assigning to it certain individuals, (as Amelius or Pilate,) at all events it is clear, if only from the example of Alexander Severus, that such a class existed.

But then it is abundantly manifest, that there was another more conspicuous, and more active class. The bigotted and zealous heathen clearly perceived, and bitterly felt, the irreconcilableness of our Lord's claims and doctrine with their whole system. They saw the absurdity of that fiction by which some would represent *him* to be a friend or reverer of their gods, whose religion was waging a determined and effective warfare against them all. They therefore decidedly im-

\* E. H. lib. ii. c. 2, p. 41, quoted Lar. iii. p. 599.

† Apol. i. p. 71, Edit. Thirib.

puted the wonders wrought by Jesus, (as well as those of his apostles,) to unlawful magic [*γοητεία*], that is, to the compact of human artifice, with a preternatural agency of evil, ambitious, or envious demons. Thus, it is not to be doubted, did the chief ancient adversaries evade the proof from miracles,—Porphyry and Celsus, Hierocles and Julian. The evidence of this, as it respects the three last-named, will be distinctly examined. In the mean time, it deserves our attention as a fact prefatory to the review of their statements, that had those writers been some degrees less virulent in spirit, or should we suppose either of them less so than his colleagues, or that some whom they might succeed in *persuading* were of a calmer mood, it would yet be very conceivable that dogmas of superstitious philosophy, “oppositions of science falsely so called,” might warrant in their apprehension such opinions; for it is not commonly known or considered, what a commodious pretext was furnished to the heathen, by the fictions of their mystical and superstitious teachers, for affixing to works deemed preternatural either a divine or demoniacal (supernal or infernal) character; just as prejudice, passion, or interest inclined. “A good man in Chaldæa complains,” (says Porphyry,) “that his success was frustrated, after a great exertion to purify the soul, because a man powerful in the same sciences, [*ad eadem potens*] touched with envy, had bound the powers adjured by sacred powers, lest they should grant his requests. Therefore,” says he, (i. e. Porphyry,) “this one bound, and that one loosed not. By which indication he said it appeared that theurgy was a discipline (or science) for effecting *both good and evil*, both with respect to gods and men.”\* The annotator on this passage adds, “Theurgy is a divine operation belonging to the superior gods, in which, when error is committed, as Iamblichus says, then, not the

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\* Cited in August. de Civit. Dei, l. x. c. 9.

good divinities which are desired appear, but the worse, and the absolutely bad under a *semblance* of the good. Therefore it is exceedingly needful in it not to deviate a nail's breadth from the ancient rite."\*—Yet this peril was not to forbid the exercise of the "sacred arts," (as Julian terms them); for the same "Iamblichus, an initiated man, and, as he himself thinks, very religious, says that the whole art, approved by the use of so many ages and by great labour, is not to be condemned because it sometimes misleads those who practise it. Wherefore it becomes the priests to distinguish spirits by the rules of their order, and to remember that in good spirits there is *no boasting*."† An excellent rule, we may observe by the way, for distinguishing *human* spirits likewise.—But who does not see that a scheme of fanaticism so flexible, allows (nay, is framed for) any sort of evasion; and that a bigotted believer in the Platonic mythology could have no difficulty in believing the mystic shows of Apollonius or Maximus to be the product of excellent theurgy, and the simple miracles of Jesus or Paul to be the work of bad demons, "under a semblance of the good?"‡ Had their doc-

\* Vives on Aug. de Civit. Dei Annot. in l. x. c. 9, and compare Porphyry, above, p. 147, note.

† Ibid.

‡ As the first class might include a sort of semi-Christians, (see above, pp. 226—7,) so I apprehend a transition (which it appears would be quite easy,) from the first to the second, may serve to explain the conduct of some who were at first mild or friendly, and afterwards became bitter persecutors; as Septimius and Valerian. Of the latter it is said, that, although not a Christian at first, "his house was a church of God."\* It is probable that he then revered the "theurgy" of Christ; but the "magicians of Egypt persuaded him to alter his measures." If they could convince him that the works

\* Euseb. H. E. l. vii. c. 2, q. in Lar. iv. 195.

trine or practice been but a "nail's breadth" from the "ancient rite," from the established and cherished heathenism, this would be enough to settle the point.

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and doctrine of Jesus proceeded from "unlawful sorcery," their aim that he should "kill and persecute" was adroitly gained. Septimius also, as we have seen above,\* was "passionately addicted to magic and divination." He was at first "very favourable to Christians,"† but afterwards issued an edict against them. It seems a probable conjecture, that some such change in his view of the *character* of Christian miracles might be pleaded in explanation and excuse of his cruel inconsistency.

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\* Ch. xi. sect. 3, p. 175, note.

† See above, vol. i. p. 296.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## B.

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 ON THE CITATIONS FROM CELSUS CONCERNING  
THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

This writer, (in the person of his Jew,) relates that Jesus "having through poverty gone to hired service in Egypt, and there made trial of certain powers, in which the Egyptians boast, returned highly elated with those powers, and on account of them proclaimed himself a god." [*ἐν ταῖς δυναμίσιν μεγάλα φρονῶν, καὶ δι' αὐτάς Θεοὺς αὐτὸν ἀπαγγέλλων.*]\*

Origen afterwards repeats this citation with a comment. He observes that Celsus rejects the true account of the flight into Egypt, and "feigns something different, assenting in some sort to the astonishing works of power which Jesus did, by which he persuaded so many to follow him as Christ,

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† Cels. in Orig. l. i. p. 22, Ed. Spenc.

but willing to calumniate them as having been from magic [*μαγίας*,] and not by divine power; for he says "that having been brought up clandestinely, and gone to hired service in Egypt, and made trial of certain powers, he returned proclaiming himself a god, on *account of those same powers*."\* [*Θεὸν δι' αἰτίας τὰς δυνάμεις.*]

Celsus could not easily *dismiss* this subject of the miracles; for we find he returns to it with a more laboured attempt. "After these remarks," (writes Origen, which are on various other topics,) "Celsus, aware [*ὑποδομένος*] that the great things which Jesus wrought will be adduced, (concerning which we have mentioned a few among many,) pretends to admit as being true, *whatever* things have been written concerning cures, [*προσποιεῖται συγχωρεῖν ἀληθὴ εἶναι, ὅσα περὶ θεραπείων, κ.τ.λ.*] or resurrection from the dead, or the few loaves which fed the multitude, and of which many fragments were left, or *whatever other things* he thinks the disciples as lovers or reporters of miracles related. [*ὅσα—ἀναγγεγραπται—ἢ ὅσα ἀλλῶς οἰεῖται θεραπευσαμένης τῆς μαθήτας ἱστορημένα.*] And he adds, 'Come, let us believe that these things were wrought by thee,' and immediately classes them with the works of the magicians, who profess things more wonderful, and with things performed in open markets by those who have learnt of the Egyptians, bartering their venerable sciences for a few oboli, expelling demons, blowing away diseases, evoking the souls of heroes, exhibiting costly suppers, tables, dainties, and sauces which are unreal, and giving motion to figures of animals which are not truly living, but only appear so to the fancy. Then he says, 'because they do those things, will it be necessary for us to consider them sons of God, or is it not rather to be said, these are pursuits of evil and wretched men?'†

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\* Ibid. l. i. p. 30.

† Ibid. p. 53.



The reader is not to infer from Origen's account of the preceding context in Celsus, that this author, who here "*pretends* to admit as true *whatever* things the disciples have written, or whatever he thinks they may have related," therefore really believed that what they wrote and said had *no foundation* in facts or appearances. Origen, it is true, more than once refers to Celsus, as having called the accounts of Christ's miracles by the disciples "*fictions*" [*πλάσματα*,\* *ἀσπλασμάτα*]†; but this phrase would apply to all supposed *exaggerations*; and he states quite as distinctly that Celsus "*thought*" the miracles wrought "*by magic*." "The wonders performed by him" (Jesus) "*were not by magic* [*μαγανίαι*] *as Celsus thinks*, [*ὡς οἰτῶι Κέλσος*], but by a divinity foretold by prophets," &c.‡ It would be evidently absurd to suppose this or any unbeliever crediting the Christian histories and traditions *to the full*; but it does not therefore follow that he really regarded them as mere and *baseless* fictions, inventions built on *nothing*. If he had,—why not simply, uniformly, confidently affirm it? But the general concurrence of tradition, and the subsequent works of Christ's followers, forbade this. He was not so happy as to live in the age of Volney and of Paine. It is evident that the denial of facts becomes more possible and easy after so long a period has elapsed from their occurrence, as for the many voices and echoes, (so to speak,) of notoriety and tradition, to have died away and ceased. It was much more easy therefore flatly to deny the Christian miracles, even in the age of Eusebius, than in that of Celsus. It may be perhaps possible twenty centuries hence to gain credit with

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\* Cont. Cels. l. iii. p. 126, Ed. Spenc.

† Ibid. l. viii, 407.

‡ Ibid. l. viii. 384, in B. pr. p. 155. See also subsequent passages.

some, for the assertion that the most flagrant enormities of the French Revolution never happened at all, and were mere calumnious fictions; but it certainly will not be possible for a century or two. The most which can be done, within that period, by any who seek to palliate these horrors, would be to represent them as greatly *exaggerated*. This the infidels of the first ages chose to believe or to say concerning the Christian histories. It was the only course they could take: facts which cannot be *denied* by those who wish to obviate their importance and influence, must be *extenuated*. Never were writers less open to the suspicion of artful ostentatious embellishment, than the authors of the gospels; yet this seems to have been the current charge against them from heathens. Arnobius thus notices it:—"You tell us that our writers have stated these things deceptively, that they have extolled small actions into vastness, and enlarged narrow affairs by a description sufficiently ambitious. But, would that all those things could have been consigned to writing, either those which were performed by" (Christ) "himself, or those which were, with equal right and power, accomplished by his heralds."\* We have a distinct specimen of this conjectural charge in Hierocles. "It is reasonable to judge [λογισαμένοι] that Peter, and Paul, and others like them, have *boastingly magnified* [μεγαλύνουσι] the actions of Jesus."† He also admitted, as we shall see afterwards, a *basis* for these narratives; and that *Celsus* did so is very apparent both from the former citations, and from the last quoted passage itself, where he affects to grant for argument's sake that *whatever* things have been written or related be taken as literally true,

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\* Arnob. contr. Gent. l. i. p. 33, in Lar. ii. 250, note.

† Hier. in Euseb. ad calc. Dem. Evan. p. 512, quoted in Lar. iv 255, note, and in B. pr. pp. 158—9.

and then brings the greater wonders of magicians, and even the delusions of jugglers into comparison. Those who are familiar with the scurrilous matter and style of Celsus, (as extant in Origen,) will be not at all surprised at this. But we may be further confirmed in the conclusion that he really meant, as feeling it inevitable, to *admit* certain wonders wrought by Jesus, by comparing a subsequent passage of Origen, where, after adducing the prediction of the siege of Jerusalem, to refute Celsus's denial of Christ's prophetic power, he adds as follows :—"Celsus might, after *admitting* or *conceding* that Jesus foreknew what should befall him, have seemed to make light of *this*, [ἐξυστελίζειν μὲν τούτο δεύειν] which he *has* done as to the miracles, saying that they were wrought by conjuring. He *could* have said that many by divinations, from birds, or sacrifices, or astrology, have known what would happen to them. But this he was unwilling to concede," (i. e. the power of *prescience* in Christ,) "as being the greater thing [ὡς μᾶλλον]; whereas he admits him in some sense to have wrought the *miracles*, and thinks he has stigmatized that fact by the pretext of conjuring."\* A modern writer acutely assigns this *additional* reason. "The miracles of Jesus having been known in all Judæa, Celsus would have been confounded by public notoriety if he had dared to deny them; but this notoriety did not attach to the predictions which Jesus had uttered, since he had done so to his disciples only."†

In another place Origen observes, "*Celsus frequently* [πολλὰς] before, not being able to *hold up his face against* [ἀντιβλεπεῖν] the miracles which Jesus is recorded to have wrought, slanders them as conjurings; and we have fre-

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\* Orig. cont. Cels. l. ii. p. 69.

† B. pr. p. 156.

quently, according to our power, replied to that charge. And now he says, as if answering for us, that 'for this reason we have thought him to be the Son of God, because he healed the lame and the blind.' And he subjoins this also, 'as you say, he raised the dead.'\* The latter sentence is obscure, but, from the turn and order of the words, there seems a hint in it that Celsus, like Julian, granted the *cures* of Jesus to be in some sense real, though not his raising the dead,† and was to argue in the context that these cures would not entitle him to be deemed the Son of God. But however this may be, the preceding remark of Origen clearly shows that instead of denying that Christ wrought wonders, he had recourse again and again to the subterfuge of magical powers. It should be remembered also, that in the first of the above citations he represents him as so "elated with those powers, that he proclaimed himself a God;" and this, after returning into his own country, where the disgrace of his origin was known. To found on the Egyptian magic a fictitious pretension of *divinity*, and make *Judæa* the scene of this claim, would surely have been of all enterprises the most ill-advised and hopeless; more so than "to go to the dispersed among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks." Origen might have done well to ask—was this pretension ever advanced in *Judæa* by the venal conjurors of Egypt, or, if it had, would their mock miracles have sustained it for an hour? If, in their *own* land, where poly-

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\* Ibid. l. ii. p. 87.

† It was very natural for the more wary opponents, specially to shun the admission that Jesus had raised the dead, as conscious that this fact would strikingly ally itself with that decisive one of his own resurrection, which it was quite necessary to their scheme to deny, or to allow only as an illusion or false vision. (*φαντασμα. ψασμα.*) See Cels. in Orig. pp. 97—8, and 355, Ed. Spenc. and compare the Jewish pretext, p. 59, above.

theism hazarded its meanest caricatures of divinity, and much more throughout the enlightened parts of the heathen world, where, however, an apotheosis was nothing rare, these were to be accounted only "evil and wretched men," how came their obscure and disgraced pupil to advance and maintain a claim of divinity in the sole country of monotheists; where, instead of that habit of deifying heroes and sages, which may have encouraged the secret wish in Caesar or Apollonius, he was sure to encounter a watchful and jealous hostility to every semblance of departure from the first and great command!\*

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\* See the story of the "Shields," in vol. i. pp. 161—2.

## SUPPLEMENT.

C.

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ON THE CITATIONS FROM HIEROCLES CONCERNING  
THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

This writer, a heathen of rank in the time of Dioclesian, in a treatise, not now extant, but already cited, compares our Saviour and Apollonius of Tyana. Eusebius, in an answer to it, thus quotes the work :—"Hear, therefore, what he says, in the very syllables.—'They spread rumours up and down, extolling Jesus, as having imparted to the blind the power of seeing, and wrought some other such wonders.'"<sup>\*</sup> Afterwards Eusebius informs us, he relates part of the miracles of Apollonius, and adds, "but wherefore have I mentioned these

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<sup>\*</sup> Euseb. cont. Hieroc. ad calc. Dem. Evan. p. 512. in Lar. iv. 255.

things? That there may be an opportunity of comparing our accurate and firm judgment on each" (character) "and the levity of the Christians; since we reckon him who did these things, not a god, but a man favoured of the gods; while they, on account of a few prodigies of some sort, proclaim Jesus a god" [οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ ὀλίγας τερατίαις τινὰς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Θεοῦ ἀναγορεύουσιν].\* The levity of the Christians here censured is not that they believed "a few prodigies" to have been wrought by Jesus, which Hierocles seems willing to allow,† but that they gave him divine honours on account of these; and the firm and accurate judgment of himself and his friends is displayed in their not ascribing like honours to Apollonius, whose miracles were related as more or greater. Eusebius does not give the passage in which Hierocles describes some of them; but we happen to possess the life of Apollonius (by Philostratus) which must have been the chief source of his statements. It was judicious of Hierocles to make *extracts* only, which we learn from himself was his plan. Apollonius "did many wonderful things, of which, *passing by the most,*

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\* See p. 132, above, on the word *τερατία*, and compare the use of it by Eusebius, p. 227 above, and p. 276, below.

† This appears also from Lactantius, who, referring to this book, observes, "When he would discredit Christ's wonderful works, and *yet not deny* them, he was willing to show that Apollonius had wrought equal, or even greater. I wonder that he left out Apuleius, of whom many and marvellous things are told." And then he adds with more refined irony, "If Christ was a *magician* because he wrought wonders, in sooth Apollonius was more skilful—who, as thou relatest, when Domitian would have punished him, suddenly disappeared from the court,—than he who was both seized and fastened to the cross."\*

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\* Instit. l. v. cap. 3, quoted in Lar. iv, 254, note b.

[τα πλεον παρτις] I will make some mention.”\* It would not probably have raised, even among his philosophic friends, the opinion of his “firm and accurate judgment,” if he had told of Apollonius that he had the wonderful power of conversing with beasts, a practice which he learned in Arabia by feeding on the heart or liver of dragons;† or if he had mentioned “the pygmies and sciapodes, the tubs of rain and speaking elm, the plague-foretelling demon and king-descended lion,” which Philostratus has introduced in the life of his hero.‡ The feat which this biographer affirms to have cast “the greatest lustre on his travels,” was the curing mischievous propensities in a satyr, by pouring wine into a pond.§ Chrysostom remarks—“How many things is Apollonius said to have done! But that you may know that all were falsehood, and phantasy, and nothing true, they are extinct, and come to an end.”|| It is certainly a solid argument against his wonders, that they produced no permanent effect; but we may argue, also, from their intrinsic absurdity. It is true that various wonders of a different kind, resembling many things narrated in the gospels, though in a heathen and mythological dress, are found in the story of Philostratus; and it appears to me scarcely possible to doubt that the biographer purposely invented such miracles as should be placed in competition with those of Christ. Many instances have been

\* In Euseb. cont. Hier. ad calc. D. E. p. 512.

† Philost. l. i. c. 20, quoted in *ibid.* p. 518, and in Weston on Miracles, p. 104.

‡ Weston on Miracles, p. 106. See also Eus. c. Hier. pp. 523—6.

§ Berwick's translation, pp. 348—50, quoted in Eccl. Rev. for 1811, p. 221, where the absurd story is given at large.

|| Quoted in Lar. iv. 269.



pointed out, by Naudé and Weston,\* by Bishop Douglas† and by Dr. John Jones,‡ who observes, as I think rightly, that “the points of resemblance are too numerous, too striking, to be the effects of coincidence or chance.” “Hierocles therefore seems to have made,” (whether unwittingly or with similar artifice) “that very use of the work which Philostratus had tacitly designed.”§ If he believed the wonders of Apollonius real, there is an admission that Jesus also wrought wonders, (though in his view inferior) implied in the very comparison: if he thought them delusive or fictitious, it shows the more clearly how strong and constant was the tradition of our Lord’s miracles, since he was reduced to seek a parallel for them, by assuming real greatness in what he knew to be fabulous. There is heathen evidence from Dion Cassius,|| from Lucian’s *Pseudomantis*,¶ and from Mæragenes,\*\* that Apollonius was a philosophic juggler.††

And from this we may infer how entirely the heathen were governed by prejudice and caprice in ascribing (whether sincerely or affectedly) certain facts to certain causes. For Hierocles affirms that Apollonius “wrought his wonders by a certain divine and ineffable wisdom; not by the arts of sorcery [*ἡ μάγισσα σοφισμασι*].”‡‡ When we recollect how ridiculous many of these reputed wonders were, and how dubious at best the character of their author, we can easily understand how a

\* Weston on Miracles, 96—9.

† Criter. of Miracles, pp. 54—7.

‡ Series of Facts, &c. pp. 161—5.      § Ibid. p. 166.

|| See the quotation on the magic of Caracalla, above, p. 135.

¶ Series of Facts, &c. p. 167.

\*\* In Orig. cont. Cels. l. vi. 302.

†† Series of Facts, p. 160.

‡‡ Eusebius cont. Hierocl. p. 512. In connexion with this phrase, I would observe, that the name or character of sophist

mind so warped as to ascribe them to "divine wisdom," (i. e. to theurgy,) might impute the miracles of Jesus, the subverter of mythologies and temples, to unlawful magic. Should we find any one ascribing the ingenious labours of Hume and Voltaire in the cause of unbelief, to a spirit of pure, humble, and self denying philanthropy, we surely need not be surprised to learn from the same pen that the labours of Knox, or Wickliffe, or Fenelon, were prompted by mere ostentation, and pursued in deep hypocrisy. If, also, the professor of

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[σοφιστης], which Lucian gives to our Saviour,\* although it does not overtly describe a pretension to preternatural works, may yet, I apprehend, probably *allude* to it. For we find from other writers that this and the cognate terms were frequently used in close union with γοης, and in describing those who pretended to miraculous powers. Thus we have seen that Apollonius or his biographers treats the γοητας as ψευδοσοφους;† and Eusebius, in referring to the magic arts of the Egyptians, uses the term τα σοφα.‡ But a closer and more striking instance occurs in Philo, who calls Pharaoh's magicians "as many sophists and magicians as were present," [σοφισταί δ' ὅσοι καὶ μάγοι παρετυγγανόν]; and immediately after, describing the swallowing of their serpents by the rod of Moses, he adds, "it could not be thought that these things were the sophisms and arts of men, &c. [σοφισματα καὶ τεχνας,] but a power most divine."§ We have just seen the same word *chosen* by Hierocles to express the arts of sorcery. Lucian therefore may have adopted his phrase for its equivocal character, intimating contemptuously the miraculous claims of the founder of Christianity, as Suetonius glanced at those of his followers in the word "maleficæ." It is remarkable that the etymology of *wizard* is the same as that of sophist. (See Johnson, and Bailey.)

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\* As quoted above, ch. ii. vol. i. p. 84.

† See above, p. 134,

‡ Dem. Evan. i. iii. c. 6, p. 131, quoted below, sect. 3.

§ De vita Mosia. p. 616.

"divine and ineffable wisdom" was liable, through some error in forms (as we have learnt from the initiated),\* to evoke evil demons in the guise of the good, how much more might this be pretended of one whose system of doctrine was manifestly at variance with the ancient rites and usages? How natural for the prejudiced, in such a case, to call "evil good, and good evil?"

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\* P. 230, above.

## SUPPLEMENT.

D.

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ON THE CITATIONS FROM JULIAN CONCERNING  
CHRIST'S MIRACLES, AND HIS OPINIONS CON-  
CERNING THOSE OF JESUS, PAUL, AND MOSES.

In his work against Christianity, (quoted by Cyril,) this emperor wrote as follows :—"What good things did Jesus procure to his kindred? for they would not, it is said, obey him. What then, that hard-hearted and obstinate people, how came they to obey Moses? But Jesus, who commanded spirits, and walked upon the sea, and expelled demons, and (as you will have it) made the heaven and the earth, (though none of his disciples dared to say this of him, except John only, and he not clearly and distinctly, but let it be granted that he said so,) was unable to change the purposes of his own friends and kinsfolk for their salvation."\*

And again—"Jesus, having persuaded a few of the worst among you, is named for about three hundred years, having done in the time when he lived, nothing worthy of relation,

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\* Julian in Cyr. l. vi. p. 213,—in Lar. iv. 335, and in B. pr. p. 161.

unless any one think that to have healed [ἰασασθαι] the lame and the blind, and to adjure [ἐφορκίζειν] demoniacs in the villages Bethsaida and Bethany, are among the greatest of works.”\*

It does not appear, from these citations, nor (as far as I have discovered) from any others made by Cyril, that Julian *expressly* named our Saviour a magician or wizard, as we have seen that he did the apostle Paul (though there seems an insinuation of it in the term ἐφορκίζειν);† but we might well conclude that he agreed in this view of Christ’s works with other bigotted heathens, (that is, with the class named, at p. 229,) even if we did not possess those additional reasons which will be here suggested: especially when it is considered how his highly superstitious Platonism would incline him to such opinions. The observant reader however has perhaps anticipated,—that we are, besides, almost compelled to the inference, from what this emperor wrote of Paul, and of the apostles in general. If those men, whom he scorned as Galileans, &c. had that peculiar skill in magic which he himself ascribes to them,‡ of whom could he suppose them to have learnt it but of their *master*? Was he, whose name had been spread through many countries as the author of miracles, nay, by whose *name alone* his followers professed to work them, to be supposed himself unendowed with *powers and secrets similar* to theirs? It is indeed possible that Julian esteemed Paul a magician equal or even superior to Jesus and to Moses.—Not that I infer this from his speaking of Paul as “entirely unrivalled,”—because that might be fairly interpreted as meaning, unrivalled by all

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\* Julian in Cyr. l. vi. p. 191,—in Lar. iv. 335, and in B. pr. pp. 113 and 161.

† See Just. M. Dial. p. 321, Ed. Thirlb. and Schleusn. in ἐξορκιστής.

‡ Ch. xi. sect. i. p. 123, above.

heathen magicians; the cause of Jesus and Paul being of course considered identical, and that of Moses related to it,—but, from other circumstances, not perhaps at first so obvious.

Julian spent his youth, and received initiation in the theurgic mysteries, at *Ephesus*. He afterwards resided at *Athens*.\* He addresses his friend Libanius from *Berea*,† where (he tells us) “all *praised* his discourses” in favour of heathenism, “but very few were *persuaded* by them.”—Alas that earnest pleaders for the holy faith which *wars* with heathenism, should have frequent cause to observe and to expect the same!—He complains of the lukewarmness of the worshippers of the gods, when he visited *Antioch* in Syria, where he found only a single goose prepared to be sacrificed at the annual festival of Apollo, and that furnished by the priest: reproaching them that so great a city, “now that the gods had scattered the cloud of atheism” (Christianity), should not provide “even a bird” for their altars.‡ In all these residences and visits, Julian was a zealous heathen, secretly at first, but afterwards openly labouring, almost in the character of missionary as well as pontiff, to restore the pagan worship. No one, it is presumed, can doubt that Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece, had been the first and chief scenes of the travels and successes of St. Paul. The heathen priesthood, with whom Julian was so intimately connected, and with whom he very anxiously conferred (as his epistles testify), on the causes of the declension of their religion, must have surely possessed both traditions and records concerning the rise of Christianity: for it was of all subjects that which in the most close and mortifying way affected the honour, power, and wealth of themselves and their order;

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\* R. E. ii. 365.

† Ep. 27, quoted in B. pr. p. 266.

‡ Misopog. pp. 98—9, quoted in B. pr. p. 270.

from these local traditions and records, at Ephesus, or Antioch, Athens, or Berea, and in other cities of Greece and Asia, Julian probably gained his knowledge of the "magic" of Paul.\* He there learnt what a marked contrast there had been between his own reception and that of the *Galilean* missionary; who had been *execrated* by many, but had *persuaded* "not a few." In all likelihood, the special wonders of his criminal magic were in some instances recorded (secretly if not publicly) by the pagan party, as accounting for that mournful defection from the "immortal gods." Thus we may collect, how the magic of this apostle *in particular* came to be so highly extolled by the emperor. Its effects and history had been more *closely* investigated by him, in the very spots where they had occurred and been notorious.†

It is also probable that he would suppose a more strenuous and varied exercise of magic art and demoniacal aid to have been *requisite* for the success of Paul, who had contended against the gods and hierarchies of illustrious nations, than for that of Jesus, who had limited his efforts to one people, and a people whom these nations scorned.‡ But still we

\* We have seen that "pictures" of Paul and of Peter were preserved among heathen, (ch. xi. sect. 3, p. 235, above;) we may well believe that other memorials were then in being; that hatred also, as well as gratitude, had its records. A dumb pupil of De L'Epée, or Sicard, beautifully defined gratitude as—the memory of the heart; but who that has read or heard of feuds and resentments deeply cherished from generation to generation, does not know, that, except among true Christians, *enmity* also is—in a stronger and more abiding sense—the memory of the heart?

† This seems to be corroborated by the remarkable silence of Celsus concerning Paul, on which some comments will be made in the next chapter.

‡ Julian himself could treat the Jewish religion and nation, as it

may with certainty conclude, (as was lately remarked,) that he who attributed eminent skill in magic arts, not only to Paul, but to the apostles or first disciples generally,\* could not fail to ascribe similar and greater powers to their teacher. He had made claims of divinity to which none of them pretended, for which nothing but wonderful works could afford the shadow of a plea: and those very works which Julian admits, while he affects to extenuate them as none "of the greatest," were such as must have implied, in his own mind, the exercise of preternatural power.

Let it further be considered, that this superstitious emperor must doubtless be ranked among those heathens, who, believing in supernatural arts and influences, accounted *Moses* a great magician;† and even looked back to him, though in an

served his immediate purpose in argument or practice, either with modified respect or unqualified disdain. Specimens of the latter are found in Cyril, (l. vi. and vii.) and are quoted in B. pr. pp. 300—301.

\* See ch. xi. sect. i. Supplement, pp. 123—4.

† We have already seen *Moses* thus mentioned by Pliny the elder.\* Apuleius, a philosopher of Julian's own sect, numbers him among the most celebrated magicians since Zoroaster.† Trogus Pompeius, as abridged by Justin, speaks first of Joseph as having learned "magic arts" in Pharaoh's court, and being "most sagacious in prodigies," and then of *Moses*, as "inheriting this science."‡ Josephus tells us, in his book against Apion, that "the Egyptians acknowledge *Moses* to have been a wonderful and divine person.§" Numenius, also, a Pythagorean philosopher, and a commentator on Plato, relates that "Jannes and Jambres, Egyptians, sacred scribes, were men who had been judged inferior to none in working magic, when the Jews were expelled from Egypt. These were they who

\* P. 120, above.

† Apol. in Lar. iv. 108.

‡ l. xxxvi. p. 193.

§ Whiston iv. 367.



obscure and indefinite manner, as having been under some *divine* impulse, or potent in *theurgic* science. This is not disproved by those expressions of contempt or censure which he sometimes bestows on parts of the writings or conduct of the Jewish lawgiver, or on some characteristics of the Jewish religion. It was in the very nature of polytheism not to ascribe moral perfection either to the gods or to their votaries;\* this emperor, we are told by Mr. Gibbon, "sincerely adored the national and local deity of the Jews," and "approved the institutions of Moses,"† (i. e. some of them,)

had been deemed worthy by the multitude of the Egyptians to withstand Musæus, who had presided over the Jews, a man who had been most powerful in prayer to God, [Θεῷ ἐνζαθεῖν δυνατωτάτῳ], and had been seen able [ἐφθῆναι δυνατῷ] to liberate them from the mightiest of those calamities which Musæus brought upon Egypt." "In which words," (observes Eusebius,) "he bears witness both to the eminent wonders [παράδοξοις θαύμασι] performed by Moses, and to him as a person beloved of God."\* It appears that Numenius inclined to ascribe the victory to Jannes and Jambres, as a polytheist naturally would; but it is evident that he describes Moses as a person of most extraordinary powers, who inflicted mighty calamities by supernatural and *divine* aid.

\* See vol. i. p. 13, sub-note, and p. 49, note.

† R. E. ii. 386. Mr. Gibbon refers in the note to a "fragment" of an oration or epistle, in which Julian styles the God of the Jews "a great God." He mentions also that elsewhere, (Epist. 63,) there are still more reverential expressions.

In that fragment the emperor professes his former design of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem "in honour of the God who was there invoked;"† and in a letter to the Jewish community, he speaks of it as his intention to "sojourn in the holy city, Jerusalem, and give glory to the divinity."† [τῷ κυρίῳ.]

\* Præp. Evang. l. ix. c. 8, pp. 411—12.

† Warburton's Julian, p. 59.

‡ B. pr. p. 277.

which is not at all incompatible, according to heathen notions, with his saying many things to depreciate both. Thus when he says that the Christians "borrowed atheism from the Jewish deceit,"\* he means from that monotheism which he has the effrontery to assert that Moses and the prophets did not inculcate.† And elsewhere he more than insinuates that Moses held some reverence to be due to other gods,‡ and that he spoke of them under the name of angels or sons of God.§ Having thus made Moses in some sort a polytheist, it is no wonder that he should sometimes charge him with falsehood, and his writings with folly;|| (for if his god, like others, was imperfect, why not the prophet?) but this was not at all inconsistent with the received belief that he was "most mighty in prayer," and had wrought "signal wonders." It is very observable, moreover, that he refers to the divine or prophetic afflatus as having *ceased* among the *Hebrews*, as well as among the Egyptians, and adds that Jupiter has given in lieu of it, "the observation or study of holy arts,"¶ [των ἁγίων τεχνῶν ἐπισκεψιν] meaning theurgy. This, I think, demonstrates that he did ascribe to Moses and the prophets a supernatural impulse, equivalent or even superior to those mystical sciences which he most revered.

Now these considerations will throw much light upon this apostate's view of the miracles of Jesus, as expressed in the two foregoing citations. In the former of them he intimates that Moses had real converse with the local deity of the Jews, that he was under a divine afflatus or impulse, and therefore was able, by his splendid and potent wonders, to persuade and control a rude and obstinate people. And then he sarcas-

\* In Cyr. l. ii. 42—3, in Iar. iv. 332.

† In Ibid. l. iii. 100, in *ibid.*

‡ In Ibid. l. ix. p. 238.

§ In Ibid. l. ix. p. 290.

|| In Ibid. l. ii. p. 45, and l. iv. p. 146.

¶ In Ibid. l. vi. p. 198.

tically inquires, why Jesus could not do thus—insinuating that his magic was of an inferior and illicit character; that performing only works less public and national, less mighty and magnificent,—such as “commanding spirits, walking on the sea,\* expelling demons,”—(which certainly were not equal in publicity and visible grandeur to the plagues of Egypt or the division of the Red Sea,) he was known or justly suspected by his own kindred to practise an *unlawful* and *delusive* magic; inasmuch as they would not trust or follow him.†

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\* A curious cavil of Porphyry is mentioned by Jerome, in which he charged the evangelists with aggrandizing this miracle to the ignorant, by using the term *sea*, when referring to the lake of Gennesareth; as if there were any material difference in walking on the sea or on a lake. Jerome fully defends the evangelists by the Hebrew idiom. As we have not the text or context of Porphyry, it cannot be decided whether he meant to concede that what he deemed the minor miracle, really took place; but from what we have seen of his doctrine, (ch. xi. sect. 2, p. 147, above,) it is clear that he would not have deemed either to exceed the power of magic. Not only in poetry is the enchantress made to declare her power to “still the stormy, and agitate the tranquil seas;” but in the *Theodosian code* we read, “Many have dared by magic arts to perturb the elements.”†

† Dr. Lardner well observes, that though the gospel states the unbelief of some of our Lord’s kindred, it is not probable that it continued; but if it did, supposing them “sensual and worldly persons, they might as well reject his spiritual doctrine as any others.” It might have been added that the plea of demoniacal magic was as open to them as to Porphyry, or to the Pharisees; and further, that the mighty and awful miracles of Moses did not prevent the repeated disobedience of his nearest relations, Exod. xxxii. 21, Numb. xii. 1—12, according to that history which the Jews themselves hold sacred.

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\* Quoted in Lar. iv. 227, note g.

† See Weston on Miracles, pp. 241—2.

In the second passage Julian again admits the miracles of our Saviour, but attempts to *depreciate* them, by an insinuated comparison, either with the powerful works of Moses, or with the warlike prodigies of heathenism, sneering at those who could consider his works of kindness, "healing the lame and blind, and exorcising demons, to be among the *greatest* of works."—Cyril repels this contempt, in a passage which appears to me just and beautiful.—"Thus daring to malign the godlike miracles of Christ, it is clear he knows not how to admire what most demands admiration. It behoved not him who had assumed *humanity*, to create a world, or to remodel [*κατασκευάζειν*] the sun, and moon, and stars,—but to pity suffering *man*. And since wondrous works are ever a motive to confidence, he healed the maladies of the wretched, and prepared to renovate the life of man by mandates worthy of a God. Say, what is more illustrious than these acts—what so befitting an exalted nature?"\*

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\* Cyr. in Jul. l. vi. p. 192, freely translated and abridged.

## SUPPLEMENT.

## E.

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ON THE ANONYMOUS OPINIONS OR PRETEXTS OF  
HEATHENS CONCERNING CHRIST'S MIRACLES,  
AS CITED OR ALLUDED TO BY CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

Justin Martyr indirectly adverts to the heathen subterfuge in the following terms :—

“ But lest any one should object—what forbids” (the supposition) “ that he who is called Christ by us, being a man of human descent, wrought by *magic art* what we call miracles, and on this account was deemed the son of God,”\* &c.

Arnobius more distinctly :—“ Perhaps he” (the pagan disputant,) “ will again object, with *many* others, in those calumnious and childish terms—‘ He’ (Christ) “ was a magician : he wrought all those things by occult arts. He stole from the sanctuaries of the Egyptians the names of the more potent angels and the foreign sciences.” [remotas disciplinas.]†

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\* Apol. I. Ed. Thirlb. p. 48, quoted in B. pr. p. 157.

† Cont. Gent. l. i. p. 25, quoted in Biscoe's Lect. vol. ii. 471, note, and in B. pr. p. 159, who translates the last phrase, “ la doctrine la plus cachée.”

Volusian, himself a heathen, in a letter to Augustine, relates the objections to Christianity offered by an acquaintance of his in conversation, in which, speaking of the divinity ascribed to Christ, he says,—“Nor do the indications of so great a majesty shine forth by any adequate signs; since the expulsion of evil spirits, the cures of the disabled, the restoration of life to the dead,—these, if you consider also others,” (i. e. the wonders wrought by other men) “are small things for a God.”\*

There is a singular agreement between this reasoning and that of Hierocles:† the question, with each, is not whether those things were done, nor even by what *means*, lawful or unlawful, but chiefly whether Christ was therefore to be considered as “God manifest in the flesh.”

Augustine explains in his answer, that the ascription of divinity to Christ is not *on account* of those works. “We also confess,” (he writes,) “that the prophets did some such things. For which among thy miracles‡ is more excellent than to have raised the dead? Yet this, Elijah and Elisha did—but the prophets spoke of Christ, not as of their equal, and not superior in the same power of miracles,—but plainly foretold that he should come the Lord God of all, made man for the sake of men. Who, therefore, also willed to do such things, lest it should be incongruous,§ if what he had performed by them, he should not himself also perform. It was fit, however, that he should do something peculiar to himself,—be born of a virgin,—rise from the dead,—ascend

\* Aug. Ep. 135, quoted in Lar. iv. 483 and 486, and B. pr. p. 166.

† P. 240, above.

‡ In this signis, i. e. the miracles named by thee, and allowed by thy pagan friend to have been wrought by Christ.

§ “Ne esset absurdum, quæ per illos fecerat, si ipse non faceret.” Referred to above, p. 197.

into heaven. As to him who thinks *this* little for a God, what more he may expect I know not.”\*

Here Augustine makes the resurrection and ascension of Christ the conclusive evidences of his divine mission (and in combination with the prophecies, proofs of his Deity,) while he treats the miracles of our Lord's life as only suitable *accessaries* or appendages to such a character, which is precisely the view taken of them in the present work and chapter.

The same father (Augustine) disputing against the pagans, informs us,—“ they are so infatuated as to say that certain books, which they think were written by Christ, contain those arts by which they think he wrought the miracles, whose fame has been every where diffused.” [miracula, quorum fama ubique percrebuit.]† A little after he asks,—“ why do not they who affirm they have read such books, do some such works as they *with wonder own he did by them* ?”‡

The Abbé Bullet quotes (from the Appendix to vol. viii. of a new edition of St. Augustine) the following passage of a discourse on the creed ; which appears to have been composed in the fifth century. “ They say that Christ performed by magic arts whatsoever miracles he wrought. For even this fact also, that being dead he is worshipped, they contend, must be ascribed to magic power.”§

In a disputation on the truth of Christianity, written by Evagrius, (circ. A. D. 400,)|| in the form of a dialogue between

\* Aug. ad Volus. Ep. 137, quoted Lar. iv. 486, note d.

† Aug. de Cons. Evang. quoted B. pr. p. 167, and above, p. 223, and see ch. xi. p. 128, above, where a further quotation is given of their pretence that Christ inscribed these books to Peter and Paul.

‡ Ibid. in Jones on Canon i. p. 232, and in B. pr. p. 141.

§ B. pr. p. 167.

|| Quoted above, ch. xi. sect. 3, p. 182, note.

Zachæus, a Christian, and Apollonius, a pagan philosopher, the pagan uses language not dissimilar to that of Volusian's friend,\*—"I remember that varieties of healings and resuscitations of the dead have been long adduced; for which, however, I do not see that there was a special admiration of Christ;† inasmuch, as the more skilful among magicians may resuscitate the dead, and physicians may afford remedies for all kinds of infirmity."‡

These last cited passages do not lose their weight for the purpose to which we apply them by being of later date than some others. Coming from various authors, in different parts of the empire, and at different periods, they all conduce to show how *general* and *abiding* was the heathen admission that Christ wrought works some way preternatural.

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\* P. 255, above.

† "In quibus tamen specialem Christi admirationem fuisse non video." Bullet translates, "Je ne vois pas qu'il merite d'être singulièrement admiré pour cela," &c. No doubt this also is meant, but the speaker may allude to that indifference with which the miracles *had been* received by many in the age when they were wrought, and which he, under the same notion of the powers of magic, thinks is justified.

‡ L. i. c. 13, in Luc d'Achery Spicil. t. i. p. 5, quoted in B. pr. p. 166.



## CHAPTER XII.

ON THE INDIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE MIRACLES  
OF CHRIST.

## SECTION III.

*The reality of Christ's miracles argued from the foregoing admissions.*

THE two former sections have placed before us various opinions or pretexts of unbelievers, both Jewish and heathen, as to the wonderful powers of Christ. We have seen that some distinctly stated their supernatural effects; some alleged (even while affecting to think them delusive and exaggerated,) that he ventured *on account* of these powers to arrogate divine honours, and this in the only country where idolatry was hated. Several have related their great, and seductive influence

over the minds of his countrymen; some have recorded that he was condemned expressly *for* his preternatural works. The Jews have differed as to what superhuman cause should be assigned for them, and the heathen have denied the inference that the possessor of such powers must be the Son of God; many have tried to depreciate them by comparisons, others to rank them with the pagan theurgy; one seems to have allowed, in express words, their purity and greatness, and others (I think) have intimated the same or a like judgment by their silence: but none, as far as I can learn, in the first ages, simply and summarily *denied* them to have been ever wrought: which yet, if it *could* have been done, was surely the most obvious, easy, and efficient of all oppositions. It is worthy of observation, with respect to the Jews, that they appear to have had, on this subject, similar, though not uniform, traditions, in the various lands whither they were dispersed. Justin Martyr resided among Jews of Palestine. The Talmudists compiled their works partly in Judæa or Galilee, partly in more eastern Asia.<sup>a</sup> The Toldoth of Huldric appears to have been written in Germany.<sup>b</sup> The Jews with

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<sup>a</sup> Prid. Connex. v. ii. p. 469, quoted in Lar. iii. 548.

<sup>b</sup> Basn. H. des Juifs, liv. iv. V. iii. 430.

whom Tertullian was conversant were those of Africa; the writer of the Koran must have been familiar with Israelites of Arabia and Syria; the memoir given by Martini, and the opinions noticed by Alphonsus, were current among those of Spain. The work of Rabbi Isaac was procured in Barbary; but it may be seen from a passage in it, that the author was acquainted with the language of Poland. The traditions referred to by Agobard had been in all likelihood received from Jews resident in France; and those which we find in Celsus were probably gathered from such as dwelt in Greece or Italy. Now it is well known that large numbers of Jews, *before* that final dispersion which took place in their war with Vespasian, had been already settled in almost all inhabited countries. Agrippa, in dissuading them from that fatal war, says,—“There is no people in the inhabited world which hath not some part of ours dwelling among them.”<sup>c</sup> We learn also from this prince the strict connexion and regular communication which subsisted between all foreign Jews and their sacred city<sup>d</sup>

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<sup>c</sup> In Joseph. B. J. l. ii. c. 16. Whiston's transl. iii. 486, and see Joseph Mede on the old dispersions of the Jews. *Diatribæ*, pp. 320-1.

<sup>d</sup> In his letter to Caius Caligula, (given by Philo,) he thus refers to it,—“the sacred city, as I have said, is my native

and temple, so that we cannot doubt the frequent visits of such from all quarters to that capital both during the life and after the death of Christ.

These persons, on their return to the several lands of their dispersion, must have told *some* tale. It is not conceivable, that when so mortifying an event had occurred as the public defection and apostasy (so deemed) of a body of their country-

place, and the metropolis, not only of the one region, Judæa, but of very many; on account of the colonies which it has sent out at different times." After enumerating many countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe, he adds, "therefore, if my native land receive thy favour, not only one city, but thousands of others are benefited, established in each region of the world."\* Afterwards he mentions, that those Jews in foreign countries "who were studious of virtue, collecting first fruits and yearly gifts, from which sacrifices might be provided, and sending sacred messengers [*εφορομηνες*] with them to the Temple of Jerusalem," Augustus had fully sanctioned this custom; and he inserts a decree of that emperor, sent by Norbanus Flaccus to the magistrates of Ephesus, directing that the Jews should not be interrupted "in their ancient custom of collecting monies which they send to Jerusalem."† In a former part of the tract which contains this letter, Philo mentions the fears of Petronius, on account of the vast multitude of dispersed Jews "spread over both continents and islands," and of those "beyond the Euphrates, sending yearly large gifts of gold and silver to the Temple."‡

\* Legat. ad Calum. Opp. pp. 1031—2.

† Ibid. pp. 1035—6.

‡ Ibid. p. 1023.

men, from institutions more dear to them than life, they should have said nothing of its author and its cause. Why did none of them affirm, or conjecture, that Jesus had prevailed by his deceptive eloquence,—or by promises of temporal honours and millennial pleasures,—or by secretly dispensing, through the aid of some rich and compliable adherent, bribes to the “worthless persons” that followed him? If these things had been any where said or written at first, they surely would not have ceased to be said and written. For the Jewish nation has subsisted, though “scattered and peeled,” in all those lands, amidst the successive concussions of states; and its traditions, like itself, have past down from age to age. Nor has there been a period when it was not interested, both from the remembrance of greatness and the experience of suffering, (often by the bitterest persecutions and compulsory attempts at conversion) to account for the rise of Christianity as a false religion. Such solutions, if not adequate, would have been more safe and plausible,—nay, they would have been perhaps as adequate as that of magic; for magic, even when its actual and possible effects were so highly rated, must have been well known by thinking persons never to have effected any thing *of the same kind* with the mighty changes

which Christianity was producing.<sup>e</sup> But we find (as far as I am apprized) no trace of *such* traditions among the Jews of *any* land. What can more strongly imply the notoriety of those wonderful works of Jesus, which, as none could deny or conceal them, all his enemies agreed to adduce in explanation of his success, and at the same time to calumniate? And it claims our notice, that while the Jews have scarcely spoken (as far as we find) of the wonderful works of Christ's most celebrated followers, Paul and Peter, whereas the western heathen, for obvious reasons, have frequently specified those,<sup>f</sup> so on the other hand the Jews have ascribed a preternatural cause and character to the works of Jesus much more *distinctly*<sup>g</sup> than the

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<sup>e</sup> See Origen and Eusebius, in a subsequent note.

<sup>f</sup> See pp. 247—9, above, on Julian's knowledge of Paul's successes among Gentiles. With respect to Peter, his stay at Antioch, in Pontus, and Bithynia, and especially at Rome,<sup>\*</sup> fully accounts for the intimate knowledge which the heathen had of *his* magic, and its efficacy.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>g</sup> More distinctly and circumstantially; not more currently; as we have already seen (pp. 254—7, above), and we may farther judge how current or general the imputation of magic to Christ was among heathens, from a passage in the ancient epistle to the Philippians, ascribed to Ignatius. The

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<sup>\*</sup> Lar. iii. 404—6.

<sup>†</sup> P. 127, above, and 125.

heathen.<sup>b</sup> This also is just what might be expected ; since the works of Jesus had been wrought entirely within the land of the Jews, and the accounts of their marvellous character and power had been diffused by a succession of Jews from that common centre, to their dispersed countrymen ; while those of the apostles, performed in heathen lands, though known to Jews in the districts where they were wrought, did not go thence to all quarters, as tidings from the mother country ; and were looked on by unbelieving Jews as but the feebler sequel of that original and mighty magic which they declared to have given rise to the sect. And we may further observe, the Jews *continued* to declare this. I remarked above,<sup>i</sup> that it was much more easy *flatly to deny* the Christian miracles late than early, even in the age of Eusebius, than in that of Celsus ; and still more at a later period ; perhaps some of the heathen in the middle ages *did* so ; but it seems a proof how strong and uniform was the tradition among the *Jews* of the

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writer treating of Satan, calls him (inter alia),—an ally “to the heathen [ΕΛΛΗΝΕΣ] in their accusation of magic,” and then argues, “How could this” (Christ) “be a magician,” &c.

<sup>b</sup> The more distinct accounts of Christ’s magic, which we find in Celsus, may be considered as *Jewish*, or at least derived from that source.

<sup>i</sup> Section ii. p. 234.

wonderful works of Jesus, that they, who were certainly of all people the most likely to be informed, went on from age to age still always admitting them; for we have seen their controversialists of the twelfth century doing this as fully as those of Justin's time.

Surely all these views agree to make it unquestionable, that Jesus performed works so great and wonderful, and of such publicity, as to be uniformly and circumstantially ascribed (by his own countrymen especially) to some preternatural power.

The considerations which were adduced to preclude any subtle *evasion* of the like inference, when treating of the apostolic miracles,<sup>k</sup> will have equal force in application to our present topic. For as Suetonius was not *called on* to style the Christian sect "magical," so neither were the ancestors of the Jews of Lyons or of Spain required to designate Christ as "a magician." As nothing but the notoriety of wonderful works by the apostles can account for the pagan fiction of magical books possessed by them, or for the language of Hierocles and Celsus, or for the place given to St. Peter in Phlegon's chronicle, and the terms in which St. Paul and the rest are named by Julian,—so what but an equal or even greater notoriety of wonderful

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<sup>k</sup> Ch. xi. pp. 136-44.



powers in Jesus can account for the Talmudical fiction, that he, by a self-torturing mode of concealment, bore away preternatural arts which the Egyptians had monopolized; or for the assertion of the Jew in Celsus, that he was so elated by these powers as to proclaim himself a God; or for the still more laboured and expensive fiction of the Jewish memoirs, which introduce as a cause the "ineffable name," and assign to it signal miraculous effects?<sup>1</sup> These are the constrained admissions and inventions of unbelievers in distress.

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<sup>1</sup> "So great" (observes Martini, after introducing the Jewish tract above quoted,) "was the evidence of the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ, so great their magnitude and multitude, so great their excellence and certainty, that Jewish wickedness had no other way of escape. It fled, therefore, to its proper work, that of lying, by composing a small book, full of falsehoods and base blasphemies, from which these accounts have (in the way of compendium), been taken.—It is here to be noted, that the infatuated falsehood of the Jews, confirms, with intelligent persons, the faith of Christ, where they think to shake it; for by thus asserting that Jesus really wrought these miracles, although by virtue of the name of God, they show beyond doubt that the excellency of his miracles had been so great, that even their own impiety could not ascribe them to demons; and that their evidence had been such as even their envy could not avail to stifle."\*

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\* *Pugio Fid.* pp. 291—2.

There must have been a gordian knot of facts, which could have been no otherwise untied or cut, before such self-betraying fictions would have been chosen or espoused.<sup>m</sup>

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<sup>m</sup> Let it not be said, that the *success* of the religion, considered singly, drove them on the supposition of miracles or magic, without any *evidence* for these. Certainly I think, with Grotius, that to a *real solution*, even had there been no evidence of outward miracles, this supposition was *needful*;\* and also that the astonishing success of the religion *did*, with minds of any plainness and candour, corroborate the evidence for something preternatural in its origin; still, had the success been all, what more possible than for ingenious and subtle enemies to ascribe this to other causes, and draw from it other conclusions. We have seen that the philosopher Celsus was so far from allowing wide success an argument of truth, that he affirmed no wise man would be persuaded,—“being deterred by the multitude who accede to it;”† a motive of distaste and unbelief, which, I conceive, has prevailed with many long since his days;—and the philosopher Gibbon, when he reflected on the “scepticism of the pagan world,” the “public highways,” &c. &c.‡ could be surprised that the success of Christianity “was not still more rapid and still more universal.” These notions, however philosophic, are not and were not above the capacity of the Jewish or pagan public. Some others, quite as plausible, might be added; and, therefore, it would have been superfluous to make the dangerous admission of seeming miracles, except *notoriety* had demanded it.

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\* See vol. i. pp. 332-4, and ~~ibid.~~ pp. 312-13, note e, with its references: also ch. x. sect. i. pp. 93-8, above.

† See vol. i. p. 350.

‡ R. E. i. 505.

We have already attempted to show, that neither the signally great nor highly beneficial character which might be expected in real or divine miracles, would preclude the ascription of them by unbelievers of that age to magical artifice;<sup>a</sup> this imputation, therefore, affords no presumption against the *divine reality* of our Lord's miracles; and our former reasonings on this point are now strengthened by having since seen that the Jewish traditions could deliberately impute to the most profane and awful of frauds (to a sort of sacrilegious and blasphemous *theurgy*, used for purposes of imposture,) the most salutary of temporal effects; such as the restoration of the lame, and the cleansing of the leper.<sup>o</sup> Those who were capable of giving faith to *such* a fiction, it may well be thought, would have been capable of witnessing real miracles of compassion and ascribing them to Beelzebub.<sup>p</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Ch. xi. sect. 2, pp. 145-52.

<sup>o</sup> Sect. 1, pp. 206-8, above.

<sup>p</sup> Edzardus, after his review of Jewish magic,\* which has been referred to above, observes, "by so much the more should the charge of magic against Christ be suspected by that people, when they see that those very same powers or arts, are by the Rabbins *wonderfully commended* in their own

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\* See ch. xi. sect. 2, p. 146, note.

Nor need we stop at the conclusion—that our Lord wrought wonderful works which were *accounted* preternatural by his cotemporaries,—and that their attribution to magic art or sacrilegious theurgy affords no serious presumption *against* their divine reality—but may proceed to argue (as previously, in treating of the miraculous powers of the apostles,) that the non-detection of artifice in these works of Jesus by the powerful parties who feared and hated him, is a strong presumption *for* their divine reality; while the character and tendency of his religion, as sketched in the beginning of this work,<sup>a</sup> and the eminently unimpeachable virtue of its founder, as afterwards evinced,<sup>r</sup> concur to render the supposition of its originating in magical artifice absurd.

First, as to non-detection;—it has been long

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companions, which are most impudently imputed to our Redeemer, for the purpose of exciting hatred.”\* This may again remind us of the parallel of Hierocles.† The same spirit was in the Jew and the heathen, and led to the same subterfuge. They could ascribe the fictitious wonders of the philosopher and the Rabbi, to a “divine and ineffable wisdom;” but the real wonders wrought by Christ could only be the fruit of an illicit sorcery.

<sup>a</sup> Chap. i.

<sup>r</sup> Ch. iii. sect. i.

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\* Avod. Zara, p. 355.

† P. 242, and p. 255, sect. 2, above.

since shown, that Jesus was regarded, both by friends and foes, as assuming the character of Messiah;<sup>a</sup> and subsequently, that miracles were and are accounted by the Jews a chief test of a true title to that high distinction;<sup>t</sup> while the distinction itself implied a temporal sovereignty,<sup>u</sup> in the acquisition and maintenance of which those miraculous powers were to be employed.<sup>v</sup> But (1.) the narrative above cited from Josephus,<sup>w</sup> as to the oath of allegiance required in Herod's time, both to the Roman Cæsar and the Jewish king, with the refusal of a body of Pharisees to swear, on account of a prediction that Herod's government should cease, and the bloody severities which followed,<sup>x</sup> may convince us with what jealousy any even imagined pretension to the Messiahship would be viewed by the Roman government. (2.) The enmity of the Sanhedrim to Jesus is uniformly affirmed by the Jews themselves. (3.) Herod, the

<sup>a</sup> Ch. ii. vol. i. pp. 73-7.

<sup>t</sup> Ch. xi. sect. 3, p. 164. above.

<sup>u</sup> Ch. iv. vol. i. p. 165, &c.

<sup>v</sup> Ch. xi. sect. 3, p. 164, notes.

<sup>w</sup> Ch. iv. vol. i. pp. 166-7.

<sup>x</sup> "The king slew such of the Pharisees as were principally accused....also all those of his own family who had consented to what the Pharisees foretold." Antiq. lib. xvii. c. 2. Whiston, vol. iii. p. 69.

son of the king above named, was still possessed of partial power; being, as we learn from Josephus, tetrarch of Galilee, through the whole of our Saviour's ministry.<sup>7</sup> All authorities, therefore, whether supreme or subordinate,—with the keen prejudice of the priesthood, and the family feeling of the prince in that same tetrarchy where the Jews themselves affirm that Jesus chiefly dwelt,—must have been arrayed against him, as a person reputed to claim the Messiahship and the power of working miracles. If his miracles had been false, or even suspicious, if they had really betrayed in any degree the usual character of magical or juggling prodigies, is it to be believed that this would have been undiscovered and unexposed, or, in the work of Josephus, unrecorded?<sup>8</sup> The arguments which

<sup>7</sup> Antiq. l. xviii. c. 5, sect. 6. in Lar. i. 12.

<sup>8</sup> It is an interesting remark of Mr. Weston concerning Apollonius Tyanæus, that "his pretensions to miracles were so far from raising him in the esteem of many, that they effectually *sunk* his credit and *ruined* his fortunes; that when the maintenance only of his doctrines and opinions would have given him a place amongst the *venerable sages* of antiquity, the addition of his miracles debased him to the rank of black magicians."<sup>\*</sup>—But the "doctrines and opinions" of Jesus were unpopular both with Jew and Greek. If then *his* miracles had been really fallacious or equivocal, how much more must that incumbrance have tended to "sink" and "ruin" a system in itself so obnoxious on all sides to enmity?

<sup>\*</sup> Weston on Mir. p. 248.

were used, in an early part of this work,<sup>aa</sup> concerning the disputed passage in that historian, and what we termed his alternative testimony to the blameless character of Christ, are fully applicable here.<sup>bb</sup> For if Jesus had wrought false and delusive wonders, or such as were justly open to the *suspicion* of being so, his conduct, so far from being blameless, must have been, in this respect, *deeply* criminal ; inasmuch as he would have laboured to sustain a most sacred character by deep imposture. We now, therefore, resume the question—is it credible, that a writer, who could not have been either uninformed or negligent, who was brought up in the very central school of anti-christian zealots, who treats in detail of the Jewish sects and impostors of that day, whose feelings and interests, both as a Pharisee and as a pensioner (of Titus and Domitian), would

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<sup>aa</sup> Ch. iii. sec. 1, Suppl. (A).

<sup>bb</sup> If the passage be held genuine, then the expressions which it combines,—“a doer of wonderful or miraculous works,”—“a wise man,”—“a teacher of such men as receive the *truth* with pleasure,”\* manifestly show that Josephus did not think the miracles of Jesus were miracles of deceit or delusion: so that we need only argue (here as elsewhere) on the *other* supposition, viz. that the passage is spurious, and that he was silent.

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\* See it cited vol. i. p. 106, note

have strongly prompted him to confute and stigmatize the Christian innovation—if he could have brought himself even to *insinuate* false miracles or unlawful arts against Jesus—would have remained silent? and that in a work where information on this point would have been so natural and so much in place? The silence of Josephus, while it proves that the moral character of Christ was above suspicion, proves that, in this writer's mind, his *miracles* were so. But if Josephus, while unable to deny (as indeed all appear to have been) the moral excellence of Jesus, could still have brought himself to suspect that his wonders were not lawfully wrought, or not really supernatural, and to conceive such pious deceit compatible with a virtue otherwise unstained, would there not have been still a special reason for his intimating the dubious or unlawful character of Christ's miracles, as the only way left to him of disavowing and discrediting a creed which his friends and patrons hated, and which interest and prejudice forbad him to embrace?<sup>cc</sup>

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<sup>cc</sup> If it be asked,—how could Josephus believe Christ's miracles to be divine, or their author to be not justly chargeable with the use of unlawful powers and artifices, and yet *not be a Christian*?—I would refer the inquirer to some former



Secondly, the specific character of the religion, and the unique virtue of its founder, make the idea of its originating in human or demoniacal deceit preposterous. Whatever was said in the earlier part of this work on the difficulty of con-

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remarks;\* I would remind him also of Tertullian's observation,—that even Pilate was "in conscience a Christian;" and would further invite his attention to Augustine's comment on the silence of Seneca, which will be cited in the next chapter. Josephus, probably, was more a Christian than either of these, and yet, even secretly, might consent only to be "*almost* a Christian." But this is the very state of mind in which he would have been tempted to ascertain whatever was unfavourable to the author of Christianity, in order to be quit of that unwelcome inmate, a vacillating or suppressed conviction.

Is it not easy to believe that there are literary men, and men of honour, in different courts of Europe, who now assent in *some sense* to the divine origin of our religion, but who, if it should cease to be the *court* religion, and become an unfashionable bar to promotion, would forthwith adopt a liberal and comprehensive deism? If such men discovered any novel and formidable objection to Christianity, would they not, in defence of their own rejection of the religion, and from zeal to please the court, be *then* prompt to publish it? If they did not so publish, but, even when sending forth works in which the fairest occasion offered of doing this incidentally in a few words, entirely shunned the topic, might we not safely conclude that they had no such objection to produce?

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\* Vol. i. pp. 110-11.

necting such facts with imposture in general, applies with all its force to this most flagrant kind of imposture in particular, the invention of *false miracles*; most flagrant, since it is no less than forgery of the great seal and royal signature of heaven. If the works of Jesus, allowed by his enemies to be preternatural, were not divine, then "lying wonders" and "hidden things of dishonesty" were employed to attest and urge onward a system of doctrine which warred on all the selfish propensities of man; which, from age to age, has wrought the highest moral renovation of individuals, and has changed the social aspect of nations. Then also were these "lying wonders" devised and performed, and all their fruits of righteousness produced, by one that wore, amidst unnumbered enemies, a robe of purity on which none could cast a stain.<sup>dd</sup>

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<sup>dd</sup> The Christian fathers justly expose this incongruity.— "Magicians do no one of these things," (writes Origen) "since they neither can nor will concern themselves with what regards the moral correction of mankind, being themselves full of the most base and infamous sins."—"When we think of the life of Jesus, who can rationally compare him to magicians; and not rather believe him, according to the promise, God appearing in a human body for the benefit of our race?"\*—

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\* Cont. Cels. l. i. p. 54. Ed. Spenc.

These last arguments, however, for the *divine reality* of Christ's wonderful works, have only been

"Is it possible to judge" (asks Eusebius) "that a man who was the teacher of a venerable and altogether virtuous institute [καταρίτη πολιτείας] of holy and true doctrines, such as we have set forth, was in his habits a conjurer? If he were a magician and enchanter, a deceiver and conjurer, how did he become the author of such instruction to all nations, as we see with our eyes and have heard with our ears?—who will undertake to connect things thus irreconcilable? [τα ασυνεχτα συνάγειν.]\*

The same writer argues, in a subsequent paragraph, that to affirm Christ to have introduced his doctrine by magic, is in effect to admit that he wrought real miracles. He writes as follows.—"To say that a teacher of true piety among men wrought such wonders while he sojourned in this life, and performed such extraordinary miracles [τοιαυτας παραδοξας τερατειας] as we lately reviewed,† to have been, naturally and spontaneously, what he was, neither collecting from ancient teachers, nor aided by modern, who had done like things before him, what else is this than to testify and confess, that the matter was truly divine, and that he who was thus manifested, transcended all the nature of man? But you may say that he attached himself to deceivers for teachers, that the arts [τα σαρα] of the Egyptians, and the unlawful mysteries [τα απορρητα] of their ancient traditions were not unknown to him, which having collected, he appeared such a person as he is reported to have been. Why then did no others who were superior appear, earlier in date and teachers

\* Dem. Ev. i. iii. c. 6, p. 125, partly quoted in B. pr. p. 160.

† i. e. in i. iii. c. 4, pp. 107-8. I have referred to two Greek words here used, at p. 133, and p. 243, above.

advanced collaterally and without necessity. Indeed the whole subject of our Saviour's miracles has been treated as *accessary*;<sup>ee</sup> and introduced (as was stated above,<sup>ff</sup>) for the purpose of connecting and corroborating the previous proofs, and giving a further coherence and consistency to our account of Christianity in its origin and progress. When we had shown, which I trust has been done beyond question, that Jesus wrought works which were *deemed* supernatural, we were not compelled to adopt the line of argument that has been just

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of *him*, either in Egypt or elsewhere? Why did not *their* fame also reach the ears of all men, before this accusation was brought against their pupil? \* &c. Athanasius asks the heathen, "who then and what is this Christ, who by his very name and presence has overshadowed all things, everywhere, and abolished all, and singly prevailed against all, and filled with his doctrine the whole inhabited world? Let the scoffing and unblushing Greeks tell us this. If he be but a man, how then did one man surpass the power of all their gods, and by his own power prove them to be nothing? But if they say he was a magician, how is it that by this magician all magic is abolished and not rather confirmed?†

<sup>ee</sup> See Augustine's remark, sec. 2. p. 256.

<sup>ff</sup> Sec. 1. p. 196.

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\* Dem. Evang. l. iii. c. 6, p. 131.

† De incarn. Verb. quoted in B. pr. p. 225.

taken, in order to evince that they really *were* so. This has been, as it were, redundant; or chiefly lest any should suppose that such independent kinds of presumptive proof are lacking. For we were entitled (omitting this) to argue from conclusions previously attained. It was endeavoured to prove in two former chapters, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus,<sup>ss</sup> and of the miracles of his first followers.<sup>hh</sup> If those proofs be valid, (and the reader is requested to review and sift them,) then the mission of Jesus was divine: and it is quite sufficient to know that he was reported by his enemies to have performed works which seemed preternatural, in order to be persuaded that he did indeed work miracles by a divine power.<sup>ii</sup> We

<sup>ss</sup> Ch. ix.

<sup>hh</sup> Ch. xi.

<sup>ii</sup> In bringing to a close that view which has occupied the present and preceding chapter, of the indirect evidence for the *Christian miracles*, I take occasion to add some weighty remarks of Dr. Channing:—"These miracles do not stand alone in history; but are most intimately incorporated with it. They were demanded by the state of the world which preceded them, and they have left deep traces on all subsequent ages. In fact, the history of the whole civilized world, since their alleged occurrence, has been swayed and coloured by them, and is wholly inexplicable without them."—"They are not solitary, naked, unexplored,

\* Discourse on the Evidences, p. 22, and p. 39.

have not here argued their reality on a different ground for the sake of adducing them as separate attestations to the religion. Such are best acquired by proving first the genuineness or early publication of the gospels; which being shown, (as it has often been,) the miracles of Christ, recorded in each, become direct and independent proofs of his mission. But that kind of proof is not within the scope of the present work. The less usual view, however, which has been here taken of them, serves to give greater unity or harmony to the series of early events, as *thus* displayed; to the character of the founder, to his personal procedure in connexion with that of his followers, and to the successes of his institute. It imparts, also, as we have already intimated,<sup>kk</sup> and shall more fully show in the ensuing chapter, a peculiar credibility to those professed memoirs of our Saviour, in which a part of his wonderful and gracious works are distinctly related; and which, on this and other accounts, are invaluable to the church and to mankind.

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disconnected events; but are bound up with a system, which is worthy of God, and impressed with God; which occupies a large space, and is operating with great and increasing energy in human affairs."

<sup>kk</sup> Sec. 1, note, p. 200.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ON SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE PRECEDING PROOFS.  
THEIR CONNEXION WITH THOSE WHICH ARE  
MORE DIRECT. CONCLUSION.

SOME scrupulous examiner, revolving the aspects and consequences of our argument, may say—I admit that the mass of indirect proofs is great. I conclude even from this portion of its evidences that Christianity is divine; yet at the moment that I adopt this conclusion, I find objections arising from that very history of its treatment which has been in great part the medium of your proof. You have shown that the founder wrought miracles; that their reality was sealed by his own resurrection; that his first followers also had supernatural gifts; and you had previously argued, with success, that all this was to be expected; since, *without* such means, the wide and rapid progress of the religion could not have occurred. But I now anxiously ask my-

self—how could it be, that, *with* such means, it was so bitterly opposed, so strangely scorned, so frequently rejected? You have said,—had it been a human fiction, the multiform oppositions would have utterly baffled it. I ask,—since it was *not* a human fiction but a divine truth, and thus divinely attested and supported, why did not all oppositions sink and die before its power? Why was not its triumph universal?

We answer,—the difficulty is raised on suppositions that are not tenable; namely, that a miracle, when witnessed, must be an irresistible means of conversion;\* or rather, that there can be no divine revelation except a miracle be wrought before every one to whom it is pro-

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\* This *branch* of the difficulty raised on the rejection of the gospel—viz. the fancied impossibility that its miracles would fail to convert any who witnessed them—has been distinctly met by former reasonings.\* We endeavoured then to show, that neither the depreciation of those miracles, as magical or conjuring wonders, by prejudiced Jews and heathens, nor their unexplained rejection, afford a solid presumption against their divine reality; which is arguing, in another form, that, although divine, they were still likely to be disallowed and rejected as proofs, by the stubborn and corrupt, the superstitious and the sceptical.

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\* Ch. xi. sect. 2, pp. 145-59, and ch. xii. sect. 3, p. 208.



posed; or else, that the outward gift of divine truth, attested by the credible record of miracles, would necessarily imply the accompanying inward gift of a genuine love to that truth; or, at least, of a ready mind to examine it impartially, with a freedom from prejudice and passion, from levity or enmity of spirit.

The principle of such a difficulty (though its real extent may not be perceived) appears ultimately atheistical; or at least to involve that sort of deism which Epicurus taught. It would infer that because God does not effectuate *all* good, therefore he communicates *none*; that the heavens do not declare his glory, nor the earth bear witness to his providence, nor conscience to his justice; that nature, in short, affords no divine revelations to man, because man has so often resisted them, and grown dreadfully insensible to their monitions. We have no juster cause to suspect that Christianity is not divine, because it has been often scorned and slighted, or because it has been flagrantly corrupted, than that the sun is not a gift of God because some men shun its light; or because it does not ripen every fruit on which it shines; or because the most nutritive grains and cooling fruits which it does ripen, are continually distilled into liquids, which, in the practical use of multitudes,

become burning poisons ; and sin, and misery, and death, are thus extracted, as it were, out of its pure and vivifying beams.

Grant human nature to have been what all history and experience prove, and that neither the sight of a visible miracle would necessarily change it, nor would an unseen invincible influence on the will necessarily accompany the outward communion of divine truths,—and then the real wonder is, not that such a religion, though divinely attested, was opposed and rejected by multitudes, but that it should, in its primitive purity, in deep sincerity, and at the price of suffering, have been so often received and so firmly maintained. That which would have been incredible had the religion been false, by no means ceases to be wonderful when we have concluded it divinely true.<sup>b</sup> If it was

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<sup>b</sup> Dr. Doddridge, referring to his own prior argument, that the success of the gospel was such as could not have attended an *imposture*, adds,—“but now I carry the remark farther, and assert, that considering the circumstances of the case, it is amazing that even *truth itself*, under so many disadvantages, should have so illustrious a triumph ; and that its wonderful success does evidently argue such an extraordinary interposition of God in its favour, as may justly be called a miraculous attestation to it.”

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\* Sermons on Evidences of Christianity, Sermon 3, p. 102.

shown, at the commencement, to be a moral system so contrary to every bias of corrupt human nature, that as a fiction it could not have been attempted, and still less accepted; this grand obstacle does not vanish or become minute when the truth of the religion is proved, although that truth, and the attestations of it, are quite necessary to account for its being *partially overcome*.

If in tracing Christianity to the source, we so exhibited the meanness and ignominy of its origin, as to evince that an imposture so introduced could never have triumphed, we are to remember that as a divine revelation this same meanness and ignominy invested it, and tended to discredit in the eyes of the proud and worldly the validity of its miraculous proofs.

If both Jews and heathens were likely to oppose such a religion with virulence had it been a fiction, so were they likely to oppose it—although divinely true—whenever, through preconceived aversion or contempt, want of attention, or vicious inclination, they resolved to persuade themselves that it was *not* so. This state of mind was prevalent; and accordingly the religion, by multitudes, *was* opposed. Had such persons not hated and resisted it, we should have lost a mournful argument in behalf of its divinity: for that which had proved palatable to evil men, without transforming them,

could not have been, in its primary character, pure and good. If the doctrine had not been divinely sustained, their opposition must have been destructive; but it no way follows that if it was so sustained, their enmity must have been annihilated or powerless. There is more cause to be grieved than to be astonished or perplexed, at the frequent non-acceptance of such a religion as the Christian, even by those who witnessed some of its miraculous attestations, much more by those who only heard of them. One class would reject it with scorn and enmity;<sup>c</sup> another would shun or decline it with stifled and wavering convictions of something marvellous and unearthly in its proofs and effects.<sup>d</sup>

But how then would each be likely severally to *dispose* of the question of these proofs and effects?—these wonderful works, which could not be denied—these unwelcome and conspicuous changes ensuing, which could not be overlooked? We have seen that many disposed of it by the convenient supposition of magic; this was the pretext (and often, probably, the sincere opinion,) of the credulous and thoughtless:—it was also the necessary refuge of those controversialists who undertook to *refute* the proof from miracles. But,—the jealous

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<sup>c</sup> See pp. 228, et seqq. above.

<sup>d</sup> See pp. 222-8, above.

inquirer may continue—how speciously is it objected by modern unbelievers, that certain eminent writers in the first century of our era have not adverted to the pretension of miraculous powers, and some not even noticed the existence of our religion. Most true, the objection is specious; and it has been put with consummate dexterity; nevertheless, does not that very silence on which it is built, appear, when rightly considered, to have been, on the part of those distinguished rejecters of Christianity, the very course which was probable, wise, and safe? Dr. Paley has forcibly described the influence, in such cases, of “contempt prior to examination:” no doubt this feeling, mingled with hatred, and with some degrees of secret fear, prevailed in those literate heathen who were less addicted to popular superstitions than to sceptical philosophy; such writers as Tacitus, Lucian, and the elder Pliny.<sup>f</sup> The two former, indeed, openly noticed the religion, and both Lucian and Pliny

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<sup>f</sup> Evid. vol. ii. p. 307.

<sup>f</sup> Dr. Enfield says of the elder Pliny, “For the most part, he leans towards the doctrine of Epicurus.” And he adds immediately after, when treating of Celsus, “An Epicurean would, of course, reject, without examination, all pretensions to divine communications or powers.”—Hist. of Philos. vol. ii. p. 131. To this latter, however, also, I should think, the remark below (p. 286) may apply, as to the inconsistency of heathen opinions.

appear to have glanced, very slightly, at the claim of miracles; but was it at all likely that they would gravely expatiate on that claim? By seriously and formally urging in refutation of it the popular pretext of magic, they would manifestly have given force and importance to the Christian plea; for, being known themselves to disbelieve preternatural agency, a deeper attention would have been excited towards phenomena which even they thought it necessary to account for by causes previously disdained. The notion of embracing Christianity would have appeared to these sceptics too preposterous to be entertained by themselves for an instant. Its very basis, a communication of God with man, was by their philosophy regarded as fallacious. Whatever, therefore, might be the magical or illusive arts of its founder and teachers, it was not for *them* to dignify such matters by discussion. They saw the 'new superstition' mean in its outset, and still addressing itself to the vulgar; if some of the higher classes were entangled, there was the more reason why *they*, as chiefs in the world of letters, should show that such had descended utterly below the philosophic level, and, with men of wit and sense, had lost caste irretrievably. Besides, there must have been that hidden sense of difficulty and embarrassment, which always makes the affectation of

entire contempt convenient, and adds a new motive to the policy of silent neglect.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps to this class should be added Plutarch. Though his philosophy leant to Platonism, and was therefore more superstitious,<sup>h</sup> it was, like that of many heathens, inconsistent with itself, and “we sometimes find him doubting with the Pyrrhonists.”<sup>i</sup> Hating Christianity, if only as adverse to that worldly heroism which his own writings eloquently celebrate, disturbed also perhaps by some knowledge of its wonderful facts, and its mysterious power, what more natural and expedient than wholly to avoid the unpleasant topic? A public man, and grave author, of much erudition and ability, conspicuous in his age,—the very age in which Christianity arose,—was bound, if he openly approached this subject at all, not to dismiss it feebly.<sup>k</sup> Might we not then have almost foretold

<sup>6</sup> By this last feeling we explained the silence of the Jewish Mishna, ch. vi. above. Vol. i. p. 224, note.

<sup>h</sup> See ch. xi. sect. 2, p. 147, note.

<sup>i</sup> *Enf. Hist. of Philos.* ii. 53.

<sup>k</sup> The late Dr. John Jones has endeavoured to show that both Lucian and Plutarch elaborately *opposed* the gospel, in a covert and obscure manner, in some of their writings. But his hypotheses, though formed with much ingenuity, seem in these as in several other instances, so factitious and subtle as to be entirely precarious.

that he would shun the perplexity, and waive it altogether?

But there was also a different class, in general, I think, less noticed; that of persons *partially convinced*, who suppressed or dissembled their own convictions. We ascribed to this cause the silence of Josephus: in his case, indeed, no other satisfactory explanation seems possible;<sup>1</sup> but I now add, that the same state of feeling, although in different degrees, may be ascribed with great probability to Philo and to Seneca. Augustine explains, in terms that deserve observation, the silence of the latter:—"The Christians he has not dared to mention in either way, lest he should, on one hand, by praising them, offend against the old institutions of his country; or on the other, by censuring them, contradict perhaps his own inclination."<sup>m</sup> This appears to me to be the

<sup>1</sup> I have been pleased, since the foregoing chapters were written, to find this view of the conduct of Josephus taken by Bishop Berkeley—"If we suppose him in Gamaliel's way of thinking, who suspended his judgment, and was afraid of being found to fight against God; it should seem natural for him to behave in that very manner."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>m</sup> "Christianos tamen in neutram partem commemorare ausus est; ne vel laudaret contra suæ patriæ veterem con-

\* Minute Philosopher, Dial. vi. sect. 26, pp. 315—16.\*



true key to the silence of all those who were suspended between conviction and incredulity, who had not cast down "every high thing," or who feared the "offence of the Cross;" whose pride and worldly prudence forbad them (and the more so in proportion to their literary eminence) to seem, even constructively, apologists of the hated sect." To profess the most *modified* respect or tolerance for Christianity, in the age of Nero and Domitian, (or even of Trajan,) must surely have required that firm and noble persuasion which "confers not with flesh and blood." When we consider the outrageous violence of the Alexandrian Jews,<sup>o</sup> among whom Philo resided,—or the accusation of Pomponia

suetudinem, vel reprehenderet contra propriam forsitan voluntatem." De Civ. Dei. l. vi. c. xi.

<sup>a</sup> The different shades of feeling which might induce silence, are concisely suggested in a few words by Dr. Hartley. "Both those who were favourers of the Christians, and those averse to them, in a moderate degree, one of which must be the case with great numbers, would have motives to be silent; the half-christians would be silent for fear of being persecuted; and the others would affect to take no notice of what they disliked, but could not disprove; which is a fact that occurs to daily observation."

<sup>o</sup> See an account of their turbulent and sanguinary commotions in Joseph. De B. J. l. ii. c. 18, sect. 7, 8, quoted in Lar. i. 102.

\* Hartley on *Man*, vol. ii. p. 123.

Græcina,<sup>p</sup> and punishment of Clemens and Domitilla, in the city where Seneca enjoyed his wealth and fame,—we find ample reason why each of those writers maintained his politic reserve. Let the literary reader (if such there be,) who may scarcely choose even in modern Britain to avow himself a Christian, honestly consider, whether, with his present unsettled faith, he would have ventured, in *their* day, to name Christianity with reverence, or whether, being too candid to defame and disavow it, he would not rather have avoided naming it at all.—Some of these writers may be referred to either class, and there might be several gradations and varieties of sentiment in both; but whether they

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<sup>p</sup> Whether that lady were a *Christian*, though it is probable she was so,\* does not affect our argument. She was “charged,” as Tacitus informs us,† “with a foreign superstition;” and seems to have escaped, only by the equity or lenity of her husband, to whose decision the case was referred. But we are sure that no “foreign superstition” was in the reign of Nero so hated as was the Christian; and if she were endangered by the practice of some *other* unauthorized religion, her case, *à fortiori*, would be a warning for those who might feel any leaning towards this, the most *odious of all*. The case of Clemens, &c. though subsequent to Seneca’s time, is not the less in point; for who doubts that the temper of *Nero* towards the consul would have been like that of Domitian? See Lar. iii. 184.

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\* See Lar. iii. 610—11.

† Annal. xiii. c. 32, A. D. 57.

are ranked among the scorers of Christianity, or with those who secretly revered and half believed it, in either case it appears entirely probable that they should not choose to discuss its miraculous proofs.<sup>4</sup>

That this divine religion, therefore, was often not embraced,—and also, that, (with the exception of professed and formal adversaries,) most ancient authors of note who did not embrace it, either alluded to it very slightly and contemptuously, or observed complete silence, are facts which the study of human nature might lead us to anticipate.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In that too well known paragraph of “temperate irony,” where we are led to suppose that the “sages of Greece and Rome” viewed the Christian miracles with “supine inattention,” (a passage productive of more pain and misgiving to some minds, than the subtler sophisms of Hume,) we are seduced into the notion, that nothing but inattention or ignorance, could possibly cause their silence, and then, that their silence, so caused, proves the non-occurrence of the events. But what if such were *not* the causes?

What if we had possessed good evidence of *these* strange facts,—that Helvetius, Diderot, and Voltaire, each became a *Christian indeed*,—and yet, neither D’Alembert, Buffon, nor Gibbon, in all their works, had dropped a hint of this? Would their silence prove their “inattention” or ignorance concerning the facts, and so discredit the evidence;—or would it rather prove something else?

<sup>5</sup> It may be proper also here to observe, that if there be any reader still *unconvinced* that the Jewish and heathen refer-

But it may repay our attention, to examine, before concluding these pages, a quite different point; namely, whether also the documents received

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ences to magic, &c., as practised by Christ and his apostles, must imply at the least a pretension and semblance of miracles by them,—retaining the suspicion that all those statements and allusions concerning preternatural works, referred not to *apparent acts*, but only to the Christian traditions and records, this notion, I apprehend, has been shown to be very forced and untenable;\* but if it were *not*, there would be no reason, whatever, to infer that those traditions and records were false: for had both Jews and heathens confined themselves to impugning the credibility of such records or traditions, observing complete silence as to any actual occurrence of seeming miracles themselves, they would have taken the less embarrassing and safer course: not, indeed, that it was at all likely, if Christian miracles were of notorious occurrence, that *all* who wrote of, or against the religion, should adopt this cautious course; but the productions of the able, and therefore more shrewd and wary writers, were most likely to survive and come into our hands; and *their* reserve on this topic would prove—not in the least that there was no Christian “magic” in their day, but that they, for sundry and sufficient reasons, had no mind to treat of, or allude to it.—Origen thus notices the silence of Celsus respecting St. Paul. “I know not how he forgot, or did not think fit to say something of Paul, who, after Jesus, established the churches of Christ; it is likely, however, that he perceived he should need to render a reason for the *history* of Paul, how, having persecuted the church of God, and bitterly conflicted against the believers, so as to be willing to deliver

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\* See ch. xi. sect. 2, pp. 207—13, above.

by the *Christian body itself*, as original and authentic records of its rise and early progress, are such as, from our indirect view of its history, we

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up to death the disciples of Jesus, he was afterwards so greatly changed, that from Jerusalem even to Illyricum, he fulfilled the preaching of the gospel,\* &c." This doubtless was a difficulty not to be trifled with, as Lord Lyttleton has since abundantly shown; and it may suffice to explain the philosopher's forgetfulness; but perhaps there were (touching this Paul) *two* knotty points instead of one, and if so, the omission was still more advisable. We have read not only of Paul's conversion, but of Paul's "conjuring." Now, suppose that Celsus had seen or heard at Corinth, or Ephesus, or Rome,† some heathen record or tradition of this conjuring and its effects—which were likely to be much more current and more circumstantial in *his* age, (that of Adrian or Antoninus,) than in the subsequent age of Julian; or suppose that he had chanced to see in the house of some heterodox heathen, a picture of Paul working a magical cure;‡ here I conceive, would be *further* reason for forgetting or overlooking the apostle. It was far easier and safer to write, in general terms, "the Christians seem to prevail by the names and incantations of certain demons,"§ and to suppose that Christ learned magic in Egypt,|| than it would have been to discuss and dispose of the particular "conjurings" of Paul, which took place, perhaps, in his own province or city, and were reported and kept in memory, through other channels, and with more detail, than the remoter works of Jesus.

Julian might have done well to imitate that elder writer's reserve; it would have deprived us of a morsel of hostile

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\* Orig. c. Cels. l. ii. p. 49, Ed. Spenc.

† Ch. xii. sect. 2, p. 247, above.

‡ See p. 182, above.

§ Cels. in Orig. p. 122, above.

|| Pp. 232-3, above.

might expect the genuine records to be. This may perhaps best be judged of, by imagining a case where a knowledge of the *principles* of Christianity should exist, apart from any knowledge of its *direct history*.

Let us suppose a thoughtful student purposely so educated, that his acquaintance with the doctrines, precepts, and promises of the gospel had been derived solely through a compilation, which might be wholly scriptural, and by him be deemed canonical, but which should include scarcely any thing of history;\* so that his historical view of Christian facts should be as yet entirely drawn from indirect sources like the foregoing. Let us assume that he has on these grounds con-

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evidence; but angry partisans, however talented, are not always discreet. Yet *had* he refrained from styling St. Paul "the chief of all conjurors," the direct evidence for the apostle's wonderful works, would not have been suspicious on that account. The Emperor's silence, if Paul wrought such works, would only have proved his own discretion; though his unguarded abusive admission adds a strong indirect proof to the direct evidence that they were wrought.

\* Such a treatise as might be framed by combining all the purely doctrinal and preceptive parts of the New Testament; in which the facts of our Saviour's death and resurrection would be only implied, by mention of the high and solemn ends which those events accomplished; in which also the accounts of miracles and of persecutions were not alluded to.

cluded the religion divine. Indeed, in studying such a digest of its doctrines and declarations, its promises and commands, the estimate of its specific *character*, (as proving it to be no fiction,) would be of a much *more* intimate and satisfactory kind than was aimed at in the beginning of this work, and would thus more powerfully concur with our subsequent proofs to evince its divinity. But would a student deeply interested in the subject, and limited to such modes of information, look for nothing more? Would he not, on the contrary, naturally ask,—can you have given me all? Where are the *Christian memoirs* of the events which induced and accompanied this great moral change, and by which these divine doctrines and promises were attested? Is it possible that none were written, or that they all have perished?

Produce in answer the original text of the New Testament, but with each distinct writing bound *apart*;<sup>†</sup> and tell him,—these twenty-seven ancient tracts are what the early Christians treasured and transcribed, as the authentic memoirs of their religion. I shall now place them in your hands to exa-

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<sup>†</sup> For we never, I think, can wholly and practically abstract ourselves from the habit of viewing the New Testament as a single book; though we have both received and given admonitions that it should not be so regarded.

mine; but, being familiar with their contents myself, let me first mention, as an incentive to the study, some respects in which they will be found to establish and illustrate the facts that our indirect accounts of Christianity have, in part, and circuitously made known.

You have collected from Jews and heathens the place and period of the birth of Jesus, his humble station, his claim of Messiahship, and the obscurity of his followers. In the Christian writings before you, all those facts are detailed. — You have learnt from his enemies the reproach of his public execution. Here you will find independent and circumstantial narratives of that awful tragedy, his condemnation and crucifixion.

You have been led to infer satisfactorily, both from the silence and conduct of his adversaries, the blameless character of Jesus. In these memoirs you will find several agreeing portraits of his perfect moral excellence, which it would be absurd to suppose that impostors could conceive and delineate.

You have observed the eminent wisdom and dignity ascribed by some heathens to Christ: you will here read accounts of his discourses and actions which will enable you to judge whether his enemies could rationally refuse that homage.



You have had to estimate, from hostile hints and concessions, the general morality of the early Christians. In these narratives and letters you will gather much more fully the correct principles which they held, and the *unusual* virtues which they practised; without any palliation, however, of their errors or their offences.

You were made acquainted, from various sources, with the probable and actual oppositions of the Jews to the faith of Christ. You will discover in these writings, that persecutions from their own countrymen were predicted by Jesus to his followers, and afterwards referred to by themselves, in several forms, both historical and epistolary.

You ascertained from heathens themselves the habits of heathenism, and learnt the character of pagan persecutions; that they proceeded both from the state and from the people, and that, with frequent severity and violence, continual reproach and ridicule were combined. These circumstances can be but partially developed in the canonical writings of the Christians, because they do not reach to the end of the apostolic age, nor include more than a small section of the apostolic labours: the memoirs, however, will be found to describe, and the letters strikingly to confirm, the sufferings of one apostle among the gentiles, while they likewise clearly intimate an actual state of

hardship and danger among gentile converts in general, and the contempt and mockery, as well as violence, to which the religion was subjected.

You have learnt, from the clear testimony of enemies, the wide and rapid progress of the Gospel. The Christian account of the first years of its propagation, although very brief and limited, will be seen to correspond entirely, as far as it extends, with those testimonies.

You have been assured, by several arguments,—founded on the belief and acts of Christians, and the conduct of their enemies,—of the reality of Christ's resurrection. In the memoirs now laid before you, that great event is very circumstantially attested, by writers evidently not in concert;<sup>u</sup> and in every subsequent discourse and epistle it is always presupposed, both directly and incidentally, as a fact quite incontestable.

You have concluded that miraculous powers in Christ's followers were the probable sequel of such an event; and you have met with various remarkable admissions from enemies that they did lay claim to certain preternatural powers, and perform apparent wonders. One of the narratives before you con-

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<sup>u</sup> See ch. ix. sect. 3, p. 72, note.

tains explicit accounts of some of their miracles, and of many signal effects produced by them;—and more than one epistle plainly appeals to those gifts, in the face of opponents, separatists, and rivals.

You have perceived the great difficulty and disadvantage which the first missionaries must have experienced, when preaching the gospel in the different languages and dialects of the heathen world. The history of the apostles, and the correspondence of Paul, will show how this disqualification was miraculously removed.

You have judged it exceedingly improbable that He who rose from the grave, and whose followers wrought miracles, should himself not have previously displayed a similar power; and you have found abundant confessions, especially from enemies among his own nation, that preternatural wonders were exhibited by him, and produced a great impression. Now in the Christian records of the life of Jesus, you will read specific details of his many, and diverse, and ‘notable’ miracles; and these impressively agreeing with the holiness and benevolence of the Saviour’s character and purpose.

Would not the supposed Christian student, while you gave this sketch of the historical contents of the New Testament, (to him as yet unknown,)

be often ready to interrupt you with the expression of his joy—these are indeed the very treasures I wanted,—these writings must be above all price!—and would he not find the promise of his informant verified in their perusal? Neither would he, I conceive, be dissatisfied (at least in some views) with the peculiar method by which his knowledge of Christianity had been conveyed.\* He would reflect with satisfaction,—I did not rest my belief of the religion primarily on the genuineness and veracity of Christian records. On the contrary, I was convinced of its divine origin before I knew any thing of their historical contents: and I now ground on that prior conviction the strongest presumption for the authenticity of these records. Some records there must have been. To a suffering sect they must have been inestimable, as relating the miraculous facts which could alone make their sufferings tolerable. It is incredible that they should have been lost and others substi-

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\* It is, of course, not meant to be implied that such a mode of conveying it would be advisable in practice. The case is merely imagined for a purpose. Its practical disadvantages, and even inconsistency with what Protestant Christians account a sacred duty, that every one "from a child" should "know the Holy Scriptures," are sufficiently obvious.

tuted. I learn that these were uniformly received and sacredly preserved by the ancient Christians. No others ever competed with these. It was highly probable that others of a spurious or doubtful character should have been composed and dispersed, examined and rejected: and this I find to have been the fact. But besides, I recognise here the system of doctrines which was previously collected for my instruction, and which I have already felt to be divine; and I read, as promised, historical details that strikingly confirm and elucidate all those facts concerning the religion which, from indirect sources, had been but very partially traced. I receive these writings, therefore, as the most precious gift of divine knowledge. Without the previous possession of their doctrines and precepts, my acquaintance with the character of the religion would have been as cold and ineffectual as my view of its origin was slight and incomplete; but now that I possess them as a whole, I have a more abundant persuasion that Christianity was of God, and that its truths "make wise unto salvation."

Thus it will be perceived, that the kinds of proof to which this work has been confined, stand in juxtaposition and alliance with all others. Nor indeed have we entered on the whole amount of proof of the same class. For we might, in like

manner, without at all assuming the genuineness and veracity of the New Testament, avail ourselves of the most important portion of *prophetic* proof. And it might further be argued, that there is a refined, and complex, and profound *self-evidence* in the apostolic writings, which, without any prior assumption whatever of their historical truth, goes far to demonstrate their divine inspiration.

This would be sufficiently distinct from our opening argument, which went to prove negatively, from a survey of Christianity, as compared with other religions, and with human nature, that it could not be an invention of *man*. The inquiry to which I refer, would aim to evince, by a more deep and interior view of its doctrines in themselves (and in their mutual harmony,) how profoundly worthy it is of *God*, and how much *more* above the reach of fiction than was there discerned.\*

We may perhaps venture, figuratively to describe the system of Christian truth, as an edifice supported on three great clusters of pillars, differing in materials and in magnitude. One distinct cluster

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\* I know no work in which a part of this inquiry has been pursued with such originality and force, as in Mr. Erskine's *Remarks on the Internal Evidence*.

is the assemblage of proof from miracles. Its most massy shafts are those which rest on the authenticity of our canonical books. And it must not be forgotten, that here each gospel and every epistle is a separate pillar. Each bears testimony (if to no other) at least to the one crowning miracle—that Christ is risen.

Another group is that central mass of closely associated proofs, which are derived from the spirit and tendency, the effects and doctrine, of the gospel; including both the comparison of it in these respects with other religious systems, and that deeper and more spiritual self-evidence to which we lately adverted.

A third consists of the proofs from prophecy. It includes not only the several predictions of the Old Testament which are of the class above alluded to, but also those of which the circumstantial fulfilment is learnt from the New Testament alone; and those of our Lord and his apostles by which a divine inspiration is evinced.

The more insidious and therefore more injurious enemies of revelation, have often surveyed each of these clusters, pointing to here and there a flaw, artfully questioning if all be solid in the material, correct in the architecture, and steadfast at the base. We are sometimes disturbed and grieved

at the reiterated suspicion. It is well, therefore, to be prepared to walk from group to group, and lay our hand at least on one or more pillars in each, which may defy the insinuation of weakness. I trust that in the preceding pages we have done so, as it regards the *first* group, by examining such proofs of the *miraculous* origin of Christianity, as do *not* depend on the previously ascertained truth of any part of our scriptures. The pillars which we have tried and measured, are indeed comparatively slender ; but they are mainly built with the enemy's own hard materials, and founded on his own rocky ground.

In the second great and central cluster we pointed out, at the beginning, more than one distinguished column ; namely, the proofs that this religion, as compared in various respects with all other religions, and with the world to which it was offered, is not such as either could or would have been feigned. But in this many-pillared group there are far more secrets of strength than we have space or skill to develope. Its columns, like those at Elora, are of living rock, but not, like them, elaborated by an earthly hand. Their bases and capitals, their proportions and their union, should be meted and delineated by a more gifted eye.

In the third cluster, there is a solid group, which



we have done no more than distantly observe; but which no infidel can effectually shake. It is the clear accomplishment of several distinct predictions contained in the ancient books of *enemies* to our religion, by such events connected with its rise as, from the *same* and *other* enemies, are amply ascertained. This class of proofs would closely unite with those which we have more especially examined: and the facts which we have been employed in substantiating, would form in good part the materials by which to verify the fulfilment of these predictions.\*

Nor should it be forgotten, in viewing the many pillars of our faith, that while they are mutually independent, each lends to the rest a portion of additional strength. Most of them would stand alone if the remainder should fall, but yet they serve, as it were, for abutments to arches which reciprocally unite them, and give a further stability

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\* These several evidences are "exceedingly dissimilar." "They are not necessarily connected in their origin; they are independent in their principle; they do not infer each the other."\*

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\* Davison's Discourses on Prophecy, p. 39.

both to themselves and to the whole structure. The separate proof (for example) of a miraculous propagation of the gospel, which is afforded by the first epistle to the Corinthians, does not rest on the Acts of the Apostles, or on the statements of Pliny, or on the admissions of Julian ; yet it is corroborated by and corroborates each. The Acts of the Apostles would give powerful testimony to the same point, if the notices of heathens on the progress of the religion and causes of that progress had never reached us ; yet these subsisting conjointly, have respectively the greater strength. They would have strength, although there had been but one gospel instead of four, and though the epistles of Paul had perished. Yet by each of those books their strength is manifestly augmented.

The prophecies of a suffering Messiah, and of the vocation of the Gentiles, might be known to have been fulfilled at the commencement of our era, although all copies of the New Testament had been burnt in the persecution of Dioclesian : but the minuter predictions fulfilled in special circumstances of Christ's life and death, as recorded by his companions, add a circumstantial force to those broader fulfilments of prophecy ; while the records themselves are the more fully accredited by those great independent facts. The greatness and ori-

ginality, value and harmony, of Christian doctrine, form, as we have said, a mass of supports which in themselves are noble; but they lend support also to the pillars of prophecy and miracles, for they show that the system is *worthy* of the highest attestations of divine prescience and power; and if, on the other hand, we contemplate the miraculous works, we find them giving strength to the doctrine, for they divinely accord in purity and beneficence with the truths which they attest.

It would have been injustice to the cause and to the divine hopes involved in it, if, after closely examining but one or two pillars, we had not thus attempted a glance at other supports of this edifice of sacred truth.<sup>7</sup>

Yet,—be it solemnly remembered,—had we the powers of a philosophic mind, and the years of a

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<sup>7</sup> It should also be observed, that though certain portions of the evidence (such for example as we have here treated of) would, even if the rest were unhappily destroyed, have great force and weight; yet the fair and reasonable way of forming our decision, is by summing up all existing proofs *collectively*. "The truth of our religion" (remarks Bishop Butler,) "is to be judged of by all the evidence taken together. Unless the whole series, and every particular, can reasonably be supposed to have been by accident, then is the truth of it proved."\* Mr. Wilberforce, after enumerating the principal

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\* Analogy, p. 326.

patriarchal life, exactly to investigate the whole,—most profoundly would it concern us not to be satisfied with this. The whole great structure of Christian evidences is but, as it were, the pedestal of the Cross. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in

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kinds of evidence, adds, “it seems, to my understanding, at least, morally impossible, that *so many different species of proofs*, and all so strong, should have lent their *concurrent aid*, and have united their *joint force* in the establishment of falsehood.”\*

This consideration has of late been powerfully urged by a writer lately cited, whose “Discourses on Prophecy” appear to me to afford a most valuable addition of cautious, clear, and masterly reasoning, to former views of that topic. “In treating” (observes Mr. Davison,) “of any single branch of the gospel evidences, the result of such separate argument must always be taken with a reference to the other proof in reserve; and if the attention is engaged to a limited view of the subject, for a time, the greater compass of it must not be forgotten when we come in the end to apply the inference of our divided inquiry. Otherwise our notions, as to the real force of the evidence, must be erroneous, or incomplete; erroneous, if, upon a part of the proof, we conclude against the whole; incomplete, if we conclude without it. For though some kind of proof be incapable of accession by an extended cumulative reason, the proof of religion is not of that nature, but one which gathers light and strength by the concentrated force of all its moral evidence. The whole of it, therefore, must be laid together, and the aggregate of the concurrent proofs will close the investigation.”—(pp. 30—1.)

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\* Practical View, ch. v. p. 229, 9th edition.

the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." While we are anxiously inspecting the foundations, because unbelief continually labours to sap them, and because our distrust observes the attempt with pain,—there is danger lest we look too long downward from that living "image of the invisible God," that "brightness of his glory," by whom and for whom the "whole building" was raised; whom it elevates to enlighten and to cheer a darkened world; without whom the temple of revelation grows desolate, and its very inscription of immortality is but, for the transgressor, as a memorial of despair. Many of the poor and unlearned, the humble and the simple, that are quite unable to explore and measure its foundations, have been gazing intently the while upon that glorious image, and been made sure by the healing and transforming brightness which beams thence into their hearts, that Christ is the Light of the world.

Be it remembered also, that this edifice of Christian truth stands exposed to all the mists which envelope our earthly condition and becloud the human soul. Those who love darkness can wilfully obscure it all; or shall only have, at intervals, reluctant glimpses of its greatness, which inspire them with foreboding tremor instead of tranquil joy.

Nor should the believer be surprised, if sometimes, through his own offences and infirmities, the majesty and strength of the pillars of revealed truth become involved in shadows, and veiled from him awhile. Happy, if then, with the lowly and the simple hearted, he can still discern and feel a beam of glory and consolation from the exalted Cross ; and thus be reassured that, amidst clouds, and darkness, and earthquake, the foundations of sacred hope are unremoved and immutable.

Reader, he who has collected for you the preceding facts, and offered the imperfect arguments suggested by them, feels prompted and even bound to tell you, that he wrote these concluding lines under the influence of illness ; with solemn premonitions of the changes of time, reaching onward to the " inevitable hour," and into the great untried futurity.<sup>2</sup>

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\* Twelve months before the printing of them.—Time and health have been since granted for various additions and corrections, which the defects of the work seemed most especially to need. But the feeling how brief loans, both for writer and reader, those blessings may prove, has been one chief motive now to commit it to the press, notwithstanding the known and unknown imperfections which remain. The same reflection, I doubt not, has conduced to bring *many* such tasks to a period, namely—if this ought to be done at all, we are not in a world where days or powers can be securely reckoned on, till it may be done better.

Be assured, with whatever temper you or he may too often have regarded it, both, and all of us, must one day feel, (nor can we tell how soon) that the truth of this gospel of Christ is no matter of dry and speculative criticism; but a question which—as to its acceptance with the heart—ininitely concerns each accountable sojourner on earth. Unless we be ransomed from guilt, purified from prevailing sin, and made meet for an eternal blessedness, through “the Author and Finisher of faith,”—the future, to minds that have learnt the lessons of years, has a funereal aspect on this side the tomb, and a deeply awful one beyond.—If we be so redeemed and renewed, then the painful discipline of life, and even the darkest terrors of disease and death, become but as passing shades, “not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

## APPENDIX I.\*

## ON THE PROBABLE TEMPER TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY, OF PROSELYTES TO JUDAISM, AND OF JUDAIZING GENTILES.

It may repay our attention to inquire, as a sequel to the view taken of the obstacles to the reception of Christianity by Jews—Whether a temper materially different towards it might be usually expected in persons of two other classes, both differing from the Jews in origin, and one in habit, namely,—the proselytes, who had fully conformed to the Mosaic law,—and the judaizing Gentiles, (as I think they may best be termed,)<sup>†</sup> who had only adopted the patriarchal faith and precepts.

With regard to the proselytes, I find no reason to believe that they were at *all* less prejudiced against the gospel than were the native Hebrews. If indeed we should assume Christianity to have been true and divinely attested, and should also assume that, by the sacrifices which they had made in embracing *Judaism*, these proselytes were proved to be *good* men,—then it might be safely inferred that they,

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\* Connected with the subject of ch. iv. and referred to from vol. i. p. 159.

† See p. 318, below.



of all people in the world, were most prepared to hail the fuller light of the gospel. But we do not and ought not to assume the truth of Christianity in this inquiry, for then the inquiry would be itself superfluous.\* If, however, we should do so, the consequence would not follow; for the piety and morality of proselytes to Judaism will be found on investigation by no means inferrible from that change of profession. There is no sort of parallelism between the circumstances in which proselytes were made to Judaism, and converts to primitive Christianity.

Judaism, though in a certain sense hated and despised by Gentiles, could not be hated or despised on the same grounds as the Christian faith must necessarily have been. The contrast was in several points very great. Judaism could trace back its institutions to an age far more remote than the religion of Numa, or even the theogony of Hesiod; and though to the heathen their origin was obscure and uncertain, this cloud equally rested on the mythology of Egypt or of Greece. Even Tacitus, who detested both the Jewish people and their creed, says "those rites, however introduced, are defended by their antiquity."†

Christianity, on the contrary, was a "new superstition," a thing of "recent date," not "time-hallowed;" and even for centuries its adversaries seem to have thought this, its *upstart* *puerile* character, almost condemnation enough.‡

\* It is partially assumed after the ninth chapter.

† Hist. l. v. c. 5.

‡ See Suetonius, quoted above in vol. i. p. 84; Celsus in *ibid.* p. 85; Julian in *ibid.* p. 87; and in the above-cited epistle to the heathen Diognetus, which, though some think it not Justin's, is allowed to be very ancient,—the Christian enumerates this among the heathen queries—"Why this *new* kind of profession or institute has come into human life *now*, and not earlier?"\*

\* Quoted in B. pr. p. 335.

But again: viewing Judaism apart from all consideration of its high antiquity, supposing even that it had been coætantaneous with Christianity, yet as a *national* and *state* religion, it was sure not to be so much despised. Mr. Gibbon has concisely stated this "obvious difference." "The Jews were a *nation*, the Christians were a *sect*;" and he justly remarks that this, in the estimation of the heathen world, was a distinction "of the highest importance"\*

Yet further; the Jews had a political hierarchy, a chief pontiff, a sort of ecclesiastical magistracy. Although the religion had been that of the nation and the state, yet if the sacerdotal character had not been combined with secular power and splendour, it would have been less analogous to the ideas of the Roman world, and therefore more contemned.† But

\* R. E. i. 523.—The strong manner in which this distinction was made by heathens, may be seen from the words of Celsus. "The Jews, therefore, being a nation of themselves, and having framed laws after the manner of their country, and still among themselves preserving these, and guarding a sort of religion that is hereditary, act in a similar way to other men, for each carefully follow their hereditary or national customs [*τα πατρια*], whatever they may happen to be." [*ὅση ποτ' αὐτὺ χη.*]\* Whereas, with respect to the Christians, he says a little afterwards, "But I will ask them whence they come, and what national or hereditary law they have as a guide [*ἀρχηγέτην πατριὸν νόμον*], and they will say none; for they indeed sprung from the same source, and have their teacher and leader [*χρηστέατην*] from no other quarter, and yet they have separated from the Jews.||

† Tacitus writes of the Jews,—*honor sacerdotii firmamentum potentie assumebatur*. "The honours of their priesthood were assumed by their rulers as the basis or confirmation of their power." (Hist. l. v. c. 8.)

\* In Orig. i. v. p. 247, Ed. Spenc. q. Lar. iv. 136.

† Ibid. p. 253, in *ibid*.

the Christian teachers, (whatever were the primitive form of church government,) were for ages destitute of secular authority and influence, having no other connexion with the state but as enduring its hostility or discouragement, exposed therefore in this respect to the most unqualified scorn.

Again, the vestments, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the Jewish worship had a certain apparent resemblance to the heathen institutions,\* which, as we have already seen from Tacitus, had occasioned a gross misrepresentation;† and the fame and “vast opulence”‡ of their temple were quite adapted to conciliate the respect of those who had been used to place much of religion in the grandeur and wealth of such edifices.

But the early Christians had neither sacrifices nor sumptuous houses of worship.§ The “upper room” and its

\* Julian, in his work against the Christians, writes, “The Jews agree with the Greeks, except that they think there is but one God only. That is peculiar to them. But as to other things, they are in a manner all common to us both; temples, shrines, altars, purifications, ritual observances, in all which things there is little or no difference between them and us.”\*

† Hist. l. v. c. 5, quoted above, vol. i. p. 175, note. In the preceding chapter he quotes another not less so, mentioning that some held the Jewish sabbath to have been instituted in honour of *Saturn*.

‡ Tac. Hist. l. v. c. 8.

§ Celsus, on this account, compares them to the worst of mankind. “They cannot endure to see temples, altars, and images; so neither can the Scythians, nor the Nomades of Libya, nor the godless Seres, nor other nations which are the most wicked and lawless.” (In Orig. l. vii. p. 373.)—“Why have they no altars,

\* In Cyril, l. ix. pp. 305—6, as translated in Lar. iv. 339.

"pallid" inmates were equally the mark of heathen satire.\*

Lastly, those circumstances of the Jewish religion, its antiquity, its strict alliance with the state, its solemn rites and celebrated temple, and the strength and "obstinate faith" of the nation professing it, had procured for it not only indulgence, but a degree of outward respect from heathen authorities.

"Cneius Pompeius, when he took Jerusalem, even as a conqueror, touched nothing in that temple."† And the Emperor Augustus, both by his protecting edicts,‡ and his personal daily offerings in the temple,§ must have greatly checked that odium which the Hebrew nation and religion

no temples. &c.?" asks the pagan interlocutor in Minucius Felix, and goes on to make a distinction in favour of the Jews, "who once had a temple," &c. &c. (R. E. ch. xvi. note 9.)

\* This is pointedly exemplified in the Philopatris, where Critias describes to Triephton, in a strain of pompous ridicule, his visit to a Christian place of worship. "We passed by iron gates and brazen threshold; and having wound up a great many steps, we mounted, not into a house ceiled with gold, as Homer describes that of Menelaus; nor did I see a Helen, but men bent to the ground and pallid."\*

† Cicero pro Flacco, 28.—Josephus gives a detailed account of this conduct of Pompey, and commends the respect which he showed to their temple and religion, (notwithstanding his unlawful entry into the holy place.) Ant. bk. xiv. c. 4.

‡ Joseph. Ant. l. xvi. c. 8.

§ Philo de Legat. ad Caium. opp. p. 1036. He mentions in the same place that "Julia Augusta adorned the temple with golden phials and chalices, and other most precious gifts."

\* Philop. quoted in B. pr. p. 343, and in Mede's Proofs for Churches in the First Century., p. 23.

had incurred. Indeed, we have Philo's testimony how great an effect it produced; for he says,—“on this account, all in every region, even though by nature not favourably disposed towards the Jews, were fearful of venturing on any infringement of the Jewish privileges.”\*

The conclusion to which these facts lead us, is not at variance with what is shown elsewhere,† that the Jews and their religion were generally disliked and ridiculed by heathens. It only amounts to this, that they were not, especially while their temple and state subsisted, so persecuted or scorned, as that the becoming a proselyte from heathenism to Judaism was a strong presumptive mark of real piety. Heathens, induced by commercial views, by Jewish wealth or beauty, or by many other secular motives, may be easily supposed to have conformed, sometimes wholly, sometimes partially, to Judaism; especially in cities, as Alexandria or Antioch, where the community to which they would attach themselves by so doing, was ancient, numerous, and powerful. If it be not allowed, besides, that the hope of a conquering Messiah (so prevalent through the whole east), might concur with other secular views to induce proselytism, it must at least be apparent, that proselytes, when become such, would share in this national hope, and in all the bigotry of native Jews, against a suffering Christ and his suffering followers.

The other class, that of *judaizing Gentiles*, must (if we view all mankind according to the usual two-fold division) be placed with Jews and proselytes; because they cannot rank with the philosophers, and still less with the heathen at large: and yet they in fact occupied a sort of intermediate station between the Jew and the Gentile. I refer to the persons who have been sometimes termed, (as it is thought

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\* De Legat.—Opp. p. 1015.

† In ch. v. above, vol. i. p. 205, note c.

erroneously,)\* “proselytes of the gate;” but whose partial conformity to Judaism, consisted only in obedience to the (supposed) Noachic precepts, which condemn idolatry and certain great immoralities, but impose nothing ceremonial. We may conjecture on some accounts, that this class was not very numerous. First, because they were not highly esteemed by the *Jews*.† Complete cordiality towards those who go but a *certain length* with us in religion, even though the remaining points be confessedly non-essential, has not been a common temper even among Christians, though it is, we trust, (notwithstanding the counteractive warnings of some divines) greatly on the increase.—But neither could such persons be much in favour with the *heathen*. The politeness or dignity of their “atheism,” must have been marred by its openness, and by their leaning to “Jewish manners.”‡ That is not a very usual temperament of mind which consents to be thoroughly owned by no party. And besides this, the notion of moral and ritual *merits* (as was observed before) is so deep-seated in human nature, and was so unshaken in that age, that comparatively few were likely to renounce, professedly for conscience’ sake, the rites of one religion, without anxiously adopting those of another. These judaizing Gentiles, however, we doubtless must distinguish into two sub-

\* That this class of worshippers were not really regarded as proselytes, is strongly argued by Dr. Lardner. (See his Works, III. 396—400, V. 498—502, I. 66—8 ; ) also by Dr. Doddridge, (Fam. Exp. notes on Acts x. and xvii. and Introd. to 1. Pet.) See likewise Horne’s Introd. iii. 262—4.

† See Doddridge, F. E. note on Acts xi., and the account of King Izates’ proselytism in Josephus, Ant. l. xx. c. 2, Whist. iii. 251, q. in Lar. i. 65.

‡ The “sparing and infrequent worshipper of the gods,” such as Horace describes himself, was far more likely to be borne with by a genuine priest, than these unfriendly seceders.

divisions, as indeed both Jews and proselytes must likewise be subdivided; namely, persons really "devout," (such as Cornelius is described,) and persons, on the contrary, whose accession to the worship of the "one living and true God," was rather negative or speculative; not prompted by the heart. We can easily conceive of some such, influenced in part by the real sublimity of the Jewish theology,\* and induced by mixed connexions and alliances,† or by natural independence of mind, or by an aversion to rites, or to one *particular* rite—choosing the disadvantages which we have supposed to attach to such a middle position, and professing a sort of protected deism under the Jewish screen. As to the former class, the really *devout*,—whether they were of native Jews or proselytes, or of the judaizing Gentiles, last named, *they* no doubt were the persons, and indeed the only persons, whom we can affirm to have been *prepared* for the reception of the gospel;—if credible, with candour;—if manifestly true, with cordiality. But with this sort of persons, under whatever name,‡ we are not now concerned; that their proportion was very great, cannot be supposed by those who know the general spirit and conduct either of the Hebrews of Judæa, or of the foreign Jews, (many of whom were pro-

\* Sublime, even as described by a writer who scorned and hated its adherents. "They believe in one divinity, to be worshipped only by the mind; supreme and eternal, not mutable or perishable." Tac. Hist. lib. v. 5.

† See Josephus on the Judaism of the wives of the Damascenes. De B. J. l. ii. c. 20. Whiston iii. 510, quoted in Lar. i. 65.

‡ i. e. whether among native Jews or proselytes, (waiting for the consolation of Israel,)—or among judaizing Gentiles,—or among philosophic or patriarchal theists,—for that there *might* and *may* be such *individuals*, having no knowledge of the Jewish scriptures, I cannot deny, nor do I desire to disbelieve.

selytes, or descendants of such,) as delineated even by their own countrymen.

Various considerations may confirm our belief, that the great majority both of proselytes, and of partial conformists, to Judaism, were of a *worldly* cast. This may be argued, at least, as it respects *proselytes*, from the great corruptness of the society to which they joined themselves; for the moral principles and practices of the Jewish priesthood and people, were then so bad, that persons really and deeply touched with the pure sentiments of their law and prophets might hesitate (as it seems to me) to go into full communion with them. I should expect to find the greater part of such, rather choosing to stop in the class of "judaizing Gentiles."\* But we have already shown other causes which would tend to diminish this last class; and, however small it might be, there is nothing at all to make it improbable that *here* also—worldly men might form the great majority. Especially if we reflect, that this was the *unfettered* station, in which the party might be much at large, and might either advance or recede. We have called it "protected deism;" and that, (before the coming of Christ) seems to have been on the whole the convenient station for those whose worldly interests or attachments led them to cultivate the society and good will of the Jews, but who objected to a strict adoption of their law. Except in the matter of idolatry, such a profession would involve no restriction, which the more reputable sort of heathenism, and indeed the civil law of Rome, did not impose.†

From this review, we may with some confidence conclude, that the great majority of proselytes, (who were a nume-

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\* This expectation agrees with the scriptural account of "Cornelius," and the "devout soldier."

† See the supposed Noachic precepts in Lar. v. 495, and Horne Introd. iii. 262, note.



rous body), and a large proportion even of judaizing Gentiles, whom I judge to have been comparatively few, were persons of *worldly character*, who had made no greater sacrifices in becoming what they were, or professed to be, than such as some sort of worldly calculation (whether for place, profit, or connexion,) conspired to induce and warrant. This might be frequently allied with a strong and just sense of the folly and depravity of heathenism; (which doubtless some heathens had, who yet conformed to it;) and still the worldly inducement be in fact the weight which turned the scale.\*

Looking then to *such* proselytes and judaizers, (and they might include many who were respectable, and, in a certain sense, religious,) we shall perceive some reasons why they might be *more* prejudiced than even the native Jew, against the Christian sect. For as to *proselytes* of the stamp described, it is most probable (especially when we consider the general state of Jewish theology in that age,) that their Judaism was peculiarly legal and ceremonial, combining with that monotheism a strong reliance on merits both ethical and ritual; in a word, properly *pharisaic*: and that they valued themselves on being "not as other men," in proportion as they met with sneers from the Gentiles for their outlandish and uncourtly creed. But it is clear, that these, who entered

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\* The admirers of heathen philosophy may think the question insulting, but is it not a fair problem in human nature, whether if Seneca had been so placed that he could not retain his wealth, (which was immense,) without so far *judaizing*,—his philosophic scorn of contact with that "most wicked people," (see above, vol. i. p. 205,) would have prevailed over the love of money? If the infidel discards this as an absurd supposition, what does he think of Justin's or Origen's renouncing philosophy, and going over (*without secular inducements*,) to a much *more* odious name and sect?

least into the spiritual and humbling sense of the law and the prophets, must have nauseated most the fact and doctrine of the Cross. Besides this, we may observe, without resorting to Jewish examples, or to probabilities, that proselytes are very commonly anxious to put their orthodoxy beyond suspicion, and to keep pace with their own party.\* Moreover, proselytes to Judaism had undergone, in adult life, a painful initiation. They, therefore, of all Jews, would be probably the most indignant, to find this their voluntary work of merit and obedience treated lightly by the new teachers.—As to the *judaizers*, (referring here also to the worldly sort,) their religion was of the non-ceremonious, easy, and liberal description: it became them, therefore, least of all, to be intolerant, as being themselves religious “borderers,” allowed to encamp on a middle, unacknowledged ground: yet even their *tolerance* of Christianity must not be vouched for; because that system, though not ceremonial, was any thing but liberal. Its exemption from ritual burdens they fully enjoyed already, and even *had* it offered them some additional freedom in this respect, who does not see that these are light things, with such persons, to set off against the heavy demands of its repulsive and self-abasing creed, its claims of scrupulous and spiritual morality, and that actual crucifixion to the world which the very profession of being a Christian then involved?

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\* The remarkable phrase of Justin to the Jews, describing their proselytes, [κατα πάντα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐξομωσθαι σπυδασι] “they are anxious in all points to *equal you*,”\* applies, in a *general* sense, to many *far* more respectable proselytes than those, especially when the transit is to the more honoured and powerful party.

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• Dial. p. 399, Edit. Thirlb. quoted vol. i. pp. 232-3.

Will some reader say—What does this long discussion on the character of proselytes, and judaizing Gentiles, prove, except what may be at once assumed, that men in general did not, as they still do not, like the primitive gospel; and that therefore there was no sort of men, however favourable to its reception their prior change might at first view appear) of whom most would not be averse to it? I answer—If the discussion has confirmed our conviction of this, it is not too long: for let this be granted, and then the wide success of the primitive gospel is a miracle, though it were true, and an incredible miracle if it had been false. But the direct use of this discussion—namely, to show that the gospel could not be welcome to the generality even of those whom we might deem most prepared to welcome it—is not its only use, nor perhaps its most important. For if we now see that neither proselytism, nor partial conformity, to the Jewish faith, involved that kind or measure of sacrifices to which worldly views might not well agree, which they might not even prompt, then we anticipate those objectors who might try to defeat our argument from the conversion of many heathens to Christianity, by reminding us how many had been converted to Judaism. The objection, though less common, is to my mind more specious, than that drawn from the success of Mahometanism. We might, indeed, briefly meet it with an opinion of Gibbon, who thinks “the number of proselytes” to Judaism “was never much superior to that of apostates;”<sup>\*</sup> since in that case, there could be no pretence for comparing the propagation of the two religions; but I do not conceive that the historian’s opinion agrees with ancient testimonies.

We are seeking (I trust) not what is plausible, but what is true: and a much sounder answer to the inference intended in such a comparison, is afforded by the above inquiry: in

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\* R. E. l. i. 452.

which has been evinced (if I do not err) the high probability, that most Gentiles who became proselytes, or partial worshippers, with the Jews, would still have a spirit hostile or unfriendly to the gospel ; that the same views which made them, generally, what they were, would never have made them primitive Christians, or suffered them to be so ; and that therefore the fact of the one change having happened, (even though it had been much more extensive,) can never essentially help the sceptic to solve the problem of the other change.

There is another collateral reason for our judging it important to show, in a detailed manner, the probable unfriendliness of most in both these classes, to primitive Christianity. It is this ; that whatever uses may be made of the contrary supposition to neutralize or weaken the argument from the propagation of the gospel, some Christian writers have unintentionally provided that weapon for the unbeliever.

Learned and pious men, from the days of Eusebius downwards, have occasionally, with the best design, been fond of tracing and displaying certain facilities and preparatives which they conceive Divine Providence to have ordained and arranged for the easier and quicker promulgation and success of the religion of Christ.\* It is well to observe and recognize these where they are indisputable ; but if we assume them where they are not so, we not only substitute the ingenious for the clear, but we lose more as to the evidence of a divine interposition (and therefore as to the cause of piety and truth), by extenuating the obstacles to its reception, than we gain by exhibiting providential arrangements in its favour.

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\* An instance of this kind of reasoning by Eusebius, occurs on the passage of Tertullian quoted above in ch. ii. vol. i. pp. 88—9. He considers the favourable judgment of Tiberius concerning Christ as conducing by divine appointment to the more easy propagation of the gospel. (H. E. l. ii. c. 2, in Lar. iii. 600.)

The contrary view taken by Chrysostom, who regarded the refusal of the senate to deify Christ as ordained to show that the religion could rise and flourish without *any* aid from human power and patronage, appears to me more just, as well as more advantageous to our cause. His words are, as given by Lardner,—The senate “refused, being provoked that before their decree had been obtained, the power of the crucified man had shined out.” And he adds, “this was ordained against their will, that the divinity of Christ might not be established by human appointment, and that he might not be reckoned one of the many who were deified by *them*.”\*

Such topics, when viewed in different aspects, frequently give scope for inferences of contrary kinds. The justness even of Origen’s opinion, (a high authority on such points,) as to the aid which the pacific age of Augustus and his successors, and the extensiveness and unity of the Roman empire, gave to the spread of Christianity,† might perhaps be fairly questioned. Wars and tumults were frequent and destructive in the half century which followed the death of Christ. But had it been an age of perfect peace, there were also *these* consequences of the extent and unity of imperial power;—that the cruelty of Nero towards the Christians, the persecution of Domitian, and the unfavourable rescript of Trajan would have simultaneous effect through the greater part of the civilized world; while throughout all those regions there was a completeness of the same martial inspection and control, which, under the emperors ill-affected to Christianity, could be employed against its diffusion.

\* Hom. 26, in II. Cor. q. in Lar. iii. 605.

† Cont. Cels. I. ii. p. 79, Ed. Spenc. His view was followed by Orosius, Prudentius, &c. and has been adopted by Mosheim, and by Dr. Ireland. (See Paganism and Christianity compared, pp. 94—6.)

The learned and pious Dr. J. P. Smith has a similar (though not unqualified) intimation respecting the proselytes to Judaism ;† which, with sincere deference for that excellent writer, I would suggest—whether the preceding considerations may in some degree further qualify.

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\* Script. Test. vol. i. pp. 450-1.

## APPENDIX II.\*

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ON THE NATURE OF THAT ACCESSION OF PROOF  
FOR CHRISTIANITY WHICH IS DERIVED FROM  
ITS SUBSISTENCE, AMIDST ALL THE FOREGOING  
OPPOSITIONS, THROUGH THE HALF CENTURY  
FOLLOWING THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

ARE we—it may be asked—from the subsistence and growth of the Christian church through its second age,† amidst such various and severe oppositions, to infer the certain continuance of supernatural works in its support, and therefore to account its progress or stability in that age, apart from its rise and earliest propagation, a new *series* of continued proof for its divinity?—or, to be more exact, may we, from the great trials of the church, without other evidence, conclude, that in the second christian age, or even in the former half of that period, it must everywhere have been preserved from declension by a *succession* of outward miracles?—I

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\* Connected with the subject of chap. vii. and referred to from vol. i. p. 317.

† The sense affixed to the terms first, second, and third Christian age, has been stated above, in vol. i. p. 344.

think not; and I would desire neither to confound periods or circumstances that are distinct, nor to lay weight on a doubtful basis of argument. This question appears to depend on a previous one, not easy to be answered with accuracy, viz. did the Christian body *very* rapidly *increase* during that period? Of this I know not that there is any sufficient evidence. That it did not retrograde in numbers, but was *gradually* augmented, may be safely concluded. The well known passage of Tertullian, mentioning the remote regions to which Christianity had penetrated, and adverting to the great numbers of Christians in almost every city, at the close of the second age,\* undoubtedly proves that it was far from being a declining cause; but it does not prove a *sudden and rapid* increase in that age; and this not only because his statement is in a somewhat rhetorical form, and the general character of his style declamatory;† but because like statements had been made by Justin Martyr seventy years before; and, with respect to the province of Pontus, by Pliny, at a still earlier date. Viewing, therefore, the progress of the religion in the second age, as much less sudden and swift than in the former, it does not appear at all certain that a succession of outward miracles were then every where requisite to *maintain* the numbers of the Christian body, or even gradually to augment them. There were, indeed, still, in all probability, outward miracles, in regions where new churches were then first planted,‡ or where very small churches were suddenly and vastly enlarged, (if such instances then occurred,) and on other special occasions: but I do not think we have any good evidence that such were gene-

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\* Quoted in Paley's Evid. ii. 224-5.

† See Mosheim, in Lar, iv. 40, note.

‡ Origen, who wrote after the close of the second age, still refers to certain miraculous gifts as subsisting in his time,



ral. It appears to me that the true use to be made (in the way of argument) of the Christianity of the *second* age—persecuted and suffering, yet firmly sustained and growing through all that period,—is the following:—

When Christian societies ceased to have real miracles commonly wrought among them for their support and conviction, then the counterfeit or imaginary miracles (for there must have been some of both sorts) which were increasingly frequent, must have tended, by their quite dubious, if not evidently fallacious character, so far from confirming, to *shake* the faith of many; as inducing a painful retrospective suspicion.\* What then *did* sustain their faith, and prevent their renunciation of it, under so many and great dangers, difficulties, and self-denials? We answer,—the same pillars of conviction, that have supported the persecuted in much later ages, the Dutch, the Huguenots, the Lollards, or the Albigenses;—only with this great and very important difference,—that the churches in the former half of the second century, were comparatively almost in contact, both as to time and place, with certain

(Cont. Cels. l. i. p. 5. and p. 34.—l. iii. p. 124. Ed. Spenc.) ; but it is in terms which seem to denote that they were occasional. In two of the above places he uses the word “vestiges,” or “traces.” [Χρ.] In the last he mentions having seen many who were subjects of miraculous cures; but those cases may have been in different periods and countries.

\* Such has no doubt been the influence of the false or fanciful miracles of after ages, and particularly of the Romish church, on some observers. They have said,—here are plausible but delusive wonders, which many have thought real; therefore no *former* wonders deserve credit. Which is about as good reasoning as to say,—coins of Otho, or of Alexander the Great, have been often forged, on account of their known rareness and value, and have imposed on many: therefore we disbelieve that there were ever any real coins of Alexander and Otho.

*facts* which formed the strongest bases of that conviction.\* They had the means of knowing, by actual visits, the churches of Jewish Christians in Palestine, and ascertaining from inspection of their records and monuments, or papers, public or private, how long they had subsisted, and on what grounds their profession had commenced; they could ascertain whether the miracles related in the Acts of the Apostles, were known, or doubted, or denied, in the cities of Greece and Asia, where they had been professedly wrought.†

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\* It is not overlooked, that there were for the Christians of the second age, as well as for us, other strong grounds of faith, besides those which admitted, in their case, of being verified by personal inquiry. Their advantages, in this respect, over the first to whom the gospel was proclaimed, are stated in ch. x. sec. i. There is indeed one respect in which suffering Christians, since the commencement of the Protestant reformation, have had a stronger support of faith than those of the second age, namely, the more easy and general possession of scripture, and those elucidations of its doctrinal harmony and value which have been multiplied and diffused together with it. It is not meant, that the Christians of the second age ought not to have encountered, and did not sometimes encounter martyrdom, on the mere strength of those proofs which were accessible to them in common with ourselves:—I would it were as certain that we should be “also ready;”—but only, that since they had peculiar and obvious opportunities, which none have had since, for the confirmation of those proofs, it cannot be thought that these were neglected; or that if inquiry had disappointed them, or even diminished their confidence, they would *then* have submitted as they did to martyrdom, or even to the risk of it.

† Some of their communities were at or near the spot. Antoninus Pius (early in the second century) wrote to “the Larisseans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians,” not to molest the Christians. Are we to suppose that *these* suffering Christians did not interest themselves in the local tradition and record of the labours and miracles of Paul?

Will it be said—this is arguing in part from the genuineness and truth of the canonical books; a source of proof which you have professed not to include. I answer—it is not assuming, or arguing from, these points; though it may contribute incidentally to *prove* them. It merely assumes the *existence* of the Acts of the Apostles early in the second century, which I presume no scholar can doubt. A few words, however, may be offered on that point for the information of others. We may state, without referring to the allusions of the earlier fathers to this book, that Irenæus, who wrote in the latter half of that century, “has actually collected the several texts in which the writer of the history is represented as accompanying St. Paul; which leads him to deliver a summary of almost the whole of the last twelve chapters.”\* But Irenæus was a disciple of Polycarp, who had seen St. John;† and was also intimately connected with Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, who was born about A. D. 86.‡—Polycarp was probably born A. D. 80, at the *lowest*. (See Lar. 1, 326.) He had conversed with persons who had seen Christ. Much more then must he have known many who had seen Peter and Paul. It would be absurd to suppose that Irenæus would quote a book as the work of Luke, which had not been so received by Polycarp, whose discourses he had attended, “when very young,” in lower Asia, and by Pothinus, whom he had succeeded at Lyons,§ and by their flocks, both in Asia and Gaul. This single mode of proof would substantiate the *existence* of the book of Acts as a received Christian history, in those churches, in the reign of Trajan, or first years of the second century. Polycarp himself appears to

\* Paley Evid. i. 201, and see Lar. i. 367.

† See his own words from Irenæus, in LAR. i. 326, and Paley i. 186.

‡ See Lar. i. 360.

§ See Biscoe at Boyle's Lecture, vol. ii. p. 483.

allude to a passage of it (ch. ii. 24) in his Epistle to the Philippians.\* But if it had not been alluded to by him, or any other apostolic father, that would not defeat the above proof of its existence and reception in his day. And as soon as the book existed, it declared what miracles had been wrought; and where, and by whom, within the memory of man; it served as an index (so to speak) for various and feasible inquiry; the Christians of that age must have made such inquiry; we find they were still not the less prompt and resolute to endure trials and hazards; we take this promptitude and steadfastness as a pledge that they obtained oral testimony corroborating the written account of such miracles.† There were then living many Christians, whose fathers, if not themselves, must have witnessed them, if performed. Julian informs us, that before John wrote his gospel, that is, in Domitian's reign, there was "a multitude" of Christians "in many Grecian cities."‡ Pliny, that they had been very numerous at the same period in some parts of Asia Minor;§ of these a large proportion must have seen Paul and Peter, and their companions, and very many of them must have told the rising generation what were the acts of those first teachers of the faith.

The Christians of the second age could also inquire into the genuineness of the writings ascribed to the Apostles and their companions, from those churches or individuals, by whom, if genuine, the autographs must have been preserved. Further, as it was notorious, that in sixty years from Christ's death, a number of persons, in many countries, had embraced his religion, so it must have been in a great measure traditionally notorious whether many of these persons were converted

\* Wake's Epistles, p. 52.

† No doubt these considerations incidentally confirm the truth and genuineness of the book, but that is not our present object.

‡ See above, vol. i. p. 347.      § Ibid. pp. 347-8.

by miracles, as the books professed, and, therefore, whether the books were in that material point true.

We may illustrate these remarks by an individual case; suppose that of the Athenian philosopher, Aristides, who became a Christian, and presented an apology for the faith to the emperor Adrian;\* or that of Justin Martyr, a heathen, but a native of *Palestine*, who was born at the end of the first century, embraced Christianity probably about A. D. 133, came seven years after to Rome, and presented an apology for it to Antoninus Pius, then returned to Asia, and sojourned at Ephesus, and finally suffered *martyrdom* at Rome about A. D. 164.† Let it be considered whether both these persons could not readily have informed themselves on all the points above-mentioned; and whether, as occasion offered, they were likely to omit it?

Or, to bring the matter home, more familiarly, and with more exactness, to the mind, I shall suppose the reader to be now fifty-five years old; that thirty years ago he lost a respected father then aged seventy, who very often told him of the wonderful preservation of himself and six companions in a prodigious flood, which had reached a specified height in his dwelling on the day when he was eighteen: that a stranger having read a published account of this flood, thinks it scarcely credible, and comes to ask for local information. Will not this clear family tradition suffice to remove his doubt, though the event happened eighty-two years ago? But if the family also of one or more of those six companions have a written private record of the same, and the others an oral account of it, will not this satisfactorily corroborate the proof?—If, on the other hand, the visitor finds that nothing is known or remembered on the spot, (though the ages of several residents would well admit it,) will he be likely to put trust in his book thenceforward?—Suppose this visitor

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\* *Lar.* i. 437.

† *Ibid.* 341, and see above, vol. i. p. 87, note.

to be Quadratus, or Aristides, or Justin, or any Christian of their time, endowed with a plain understanding, but unknown to fame, and the event to be not a prodigious flood, but the cure of the "cripple" by Paul at Lystra,\* or the "special miracles" wrought by him at Ephesus,† or the dispossession of the Pythoness at Philippi?‡ Were there not the same means, and far stronger motives than mere curiosity, to inquire on the spot, even the motives which no man trifles with, the choice of honour or contempt, the prospect of liberty or bondage, ease or suffering? and must not the same consequence have often followed—i. e., either a clear confirmation, or else a just suspicion? And if these persons could make effectual inquiry, how much more might Pothinus and Polycarp, who were born much earlier; and yet, having lived to a great age, suffered as witnesses for the truth of the gospel as late as the reign of Marcus Antoninus? Those venerable men were born about twenty years after the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter, and long before the death of John: it will not be doubted that *they* had ample means of knowing, and of assuring their cotemporaries through the whole period with which we are now concerned, whether the miraculous powers distinctly ascribed to Peter and John, and to the apostles generally, in the infancy of the church,§ had been displayed in their subsequent journeys and labours. In particular, it must have been *personally* known to them whether the last named eminent apostle possessed those powers.||

Let it not be said, those and others of the Christians of

\* Acts xiv. 8.

† Ibid. xix. 11.

‡ Ibid. xvi. 16.

§ Ibid. iii. 4.—v. 12.—ix. 33-40.

|| The Christian tradition of the second age, attributed these to St. John, in their *highest* exercise; for Apollonius, who is said by Jerome to have lived under Commodus, related that this apostle "by divine power raised a dead person to life at Ephesus."\*

\* In Euseb. H. E. l. v. c. 18, quoted in Lar. i. 480.

that age, perhaps, did not take the trouble to satisfy themselves on these points:—it is, indeed, too true, that in ages where the profession of Christianity (at least according to its prevalent and established forms) involves no loss or trial, but is on all secular accounts entirely eligible, little trouble is usually taken to scrutinize its real claims; but in an age when the question was—shall I continue a Christian and endure this scorn, this injustice, and the hazard of imprisonment or exile, and expose my children to the same, or shall I renounce this creed and avoid these evils—how can we conceive that a measure of labour and inquiry would be spared (at least by the more considerate) in seeking either confirmations which might uphold faith, or causes of suspicion that might remove scruples and prepossessions, and justify recantation?—especially if we consider that there must have been in this age many Christians by education, and, as it were, by inheritance, who cannot be supposed to have also inherited the full attachment of those converted in adult life, and who would naturally say,—let me look more narrowly into the grounds of this very self-denying and inconvenient religion which my parents have embraced, but which my rulers and a part of my neighbours hate and ridicule?—There is no record, that I have seen, from friends or enemies, of any Christians in the first or second age having renounced the faith in consequence of such inquiries; though many did so through fear of suffering. Indeed, if the society had but *maintained* its numbers on the whole, the accession of fresh converts, who supplied the loss of those that shrank from martyrdom and of those that endured it, might itself prove that there were none who renounced it from *conviction*; that is, from a discovery of its *falsehood*. For who can doubt that such persons would have been careful to state the reasons of their conduct, and that Jews, and heathens, and *wavering Christians*, would have conspired to seize them with eagerness, and give them effective publicity?

Neither let it be objected, that as the persecuted of the fifteenth or seventeenth century believed and persevered *without* such inquiries, therefore probably so did those of the second century. It was manifestly impossible that the moderns should institute them. Does it follow that they would not have been anxious to do so, had it been not only possible, but attended with very moderate difficulty? Does any one believe, that if Wickliffe could have seen the autograph of the Epistle to the Corinthians by a voyage to Holland or Denmark; or if John Huss could have met with those whose parents had seen Peter raise Dorcas from the dead, by travelling to Trieste, such journies would have been thought too laborious for the object? Would it not have been esteemed a just and laudable object of devout curiosity, even had there been no need and no inducement to fortify, by every lawful and attainable means, the faith and patience of their suffering fellow-Christians and themselves? Julian tells us that John (the apostle) observed that the *tombs* of Peter and Paul were visited. Can we suppose that Christians were less concerned to visit the scenes where those apostles had *laboured* and were said to have wrought mighty works, while they knew there must be persons living, who, if those works took place, had either seen them, or heard of them from their own parents and friends as eye-witnesses?\* Be it remembered, we have not aimed to establish that there were no miracles in the second age; on the contrary, it is not to be doubted, that on some peculiar occasions, and for special ends, they did still take place; but we have wished to show that if the majority of Christians held fast the faith without ever having been *present* at any, or even if it were supposed they had ceased altogether, yet should we have a very numerous and *peculiar* class of witnesses, in the suffering Chris-

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\* There are similar thoughts, somewhat differently applied, in ch. ix. pp. 14-18, above, which these remarks may strengthen.



tians of that age, for the truth and notoriety of miracles in the age immediately preceding; because their truth and notoriety might still be satisfactorily investigated, and motives of doubt, of hope, of fear, of suffering, of affection, of distress, and of devotion, combined to urge the scrutiny. It is by no means intended to view this evidence as of the *same* value with that of the first age; but it still has great auxiliary force in confirmation of it. I find that view given of it by an admirable writer, more than once cited in the present work, who has referred, though very briefly, to the point.—“It is not (says Bishop Butler,) of equal weight, yet it is of weight, that the martyrs of the next age, notwithstanding they were not eye-witnesses of those facts, as were the apostles and their cotemporaries, had, however, full opportunity to *inform* themselves, whether they were true or not, and give equal proof of their believing them to be true.”\*

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\* Anal. pt. ii. c. 7. p. 289.

## APPENDIX III.\*

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ON THE NATIONAL CONVERSIONS TO CHRISTIANITY, FROM THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE THROUGH THE MIDDLE AGES;—AND ON THE MODERN CONVERSIONS IN THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS.

Dr. Mosheim informs us, that “Constantine the Great, after having *vanquished* the Goths and the Sarmatians, *engaged* great numbers of them to become Christians. But still a large body continued attached to their ancient superstition, till the reign of Valens.” (A. D. 364-79.) “That prince permitted them to inhabit Dacia, Mœsia, and Thrace; but it was *on condition* that they should be subject to the Roman laws, and should embrace the profession of Christianity; which stipulations were accepted by their King Fritigern.”† “The Christian emperors were active and assiduous in extirpating the remains of the ancient superstition.”‡

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\* Connected with the subject of ch. viii. and referred to from vol. i. p. 334.

† Eccl. Hist. vol. i. 338—9, Maccl. translation.

‡ Ibid. ii. 3.

After relating the conversion of several northern tribes of Europe, in the fifth century, and fully admitting that the labours and zeal of great and good men contributed to this happy purpose, he adds,—“but they must be very inattentive who do not perceive, that the fear of punishment, the prospect of honours and advantages, and the desire of obtaining succour against their enemies, were the prevailing motives that induced the greatest part to renounce the service of their impotent Gods.”\*

He remarks, on the national conversions of the sixth century, that, “they were extremely superficial and imperfect”—so that these nations “retained their primitive ferocity, and continued to distinguish themselves by all kinds of wickedness.”† The national conversion in the kingdom of Kent, in the sixth century, took its rise from the marriage of Ethelbert with Bertha, a Christian princess.‡

Boniface, styled the apostle of the Germans, is commended by Dr. Mosheim, for his zealous labours in the eighth century; but it is added, that “he did not always use those arms with which the ancient heralds of the gospel gained such victories in behalf of truth; but often employed violence and terror, and sometimes artifice and fraud.”§

In the ninth century, Harold, King of Jutland, an exiled prince, implored the help of Louis the Débonnaire, who “promised his aid, *on condition*, that he would embrace Christianity, and admit the ministers of that religion to preach in his dominions. Harold submitted to the conditions, and a successful mission to those countries ensued.”|| In the same century, “the Russians, having entered into a treaty with the Greek emperor, Basilius,” “were engaged by various presents and promises to embrace the gospel.”¶

\* Mosh. E. H. vol. ii. p. 10. MacI. translation.

† Ibid. p. 96, abridged.

‡ Ibid. p. 97.

§ Ibid. pp. 206-7.

|| Ibid. p. 277, abridged.

¶ Ibid. ii. 279.

In Poland, a Christian princess brought over her husband Micislaus, the reigning duke of that country, to the profession of Christianity, A. D. 965. The mission which followed this event, was "accompanied with the edicts and penal laws, the promises and threats, of Micislaus; which dejected the courage and conquered the obstinacy of the reluctant Poles."\* Soon after, Wlodomir, Duke of Russia and Moscovy, married Anne, sister of Basilus II., whose pious importunity at last prevailed on him to receive the Christian faith; and the Russians (who had generally relapsed into paganism) followed the example of this prince.†—In the same century, Stephen, the prince of the Hungarian nation, "by the influence of instructions, threatenings, rewards, and punishments," brought his subjects to abandon their idolatries.‡ About the same period, Otho the Great, made it "the principal condition of the treaty of peace, which he concluded with Harald, King of Denmark, whom he had defeated, that both he and his subjects should receive the Christian faith."§—In Norway, "Olaus propagated and established Christianity by fire and sword."||

In the twelfth century, "Boleslaus, Duke of Poland, having conquered the Pomeranians, offered them peace, upon condition, that they would receive the Christian teachers;"¶ and Waldemar, king of Denmark, "unsheathed his sword for the propagation of Christianity."\*\* After describing the compulsory conversion of the Livonians and Selavonians, the historian adds,—"it is needless to intimate to the reader that the savage nations who were thus dragooned into the church, became the disciples of Christ, not so much in reality, as in outward appearance."†† This brief collection of facts may

\* Ibid. p. 376.

† Ibid. p. 377.

‡ Ibid. p. 378.

§ Ibid. p. 380.

|| Ibid. p. 382, Dr. Macclaine's note.

¶ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 1.

\*\* Ibid. p. 3.

†† Ibid. p. 8.

suffice to forbid any comparison between the conversions of the middle ages, and those of the primitive church.

I can suppose, however, a different kind of objection or suspicion to arise in this review. It may be asked, how does this heathen condition of many countries, even of Europe, in the middle ages, agree with the accounts of Justin Martyr,\* (and the similar statements of other Christian fathers,) concerning the wide, nay, universal diffusion of the gospel, at a much earlier date. I have before explained the sense in which the assertion of Justin must be taken;† and several considerations may then fully reconcile it with the subsequent facts. First, the Christian faith may have very early penetrated several of those remote parts of Europe, as we believe was the case in Britain, and have afterwards become extinct; which we know to have been unhappily the fact in Northern Africa. Secondly, this local extinction may not always have been by apostasy or destruction, but by emigration, which it is certain has been a common and lawful resource of the persecuted. Thirdly, it is very probable that in countries called pagan, such as Hungary or Moscovy, a Christian sect may have all along subsisted, planted in the first or second age: more or less corrupted in faith and diminished in numbers; which, amidst the obscurity and ignorance, or bigotry, of those times, may not have been recognised by historians when the spurious conversion termed national came to be recorded.

It is pleasurable to turn from such events, to those conversions in the South Sea islands, which, although, necessarily, from the smallness of their population, on a small scale when viewed as national, have afforded, in our own days, so signal and animating an encouragement to missionary zeal; conversions nobly and delightfully contrasted with those which

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\* Vol. i. pp. 351-2, above.

† Vol. i. p. 351, above.

have been just enumerated, by the primitive and evangelical spirit in which they were undertaken and pursued, and by those fruits of genuine faith which appear to have been largely produced.

Still this very striking and exhilarating instance can by no means be thought parallel to the original triumphs of the gospel; it would not be so if only on account of the more various resources of the teachers, with the eminent superiority of themselves, and of their nation, to the taught; which, as we have elsewhere argued,\* give to modern missionaries, as compared with the *first* propagators of Christianity, a great and complex advantage. But it differs in another very material respect. There is no reason to suppose that any men in *power* became openly converts in the apostolic age; but if any did so, their profession of Christianity must of course have at once involved the *renunciation* or *deprivation* of that power; whereas the large or national success of the mission in the South Sea islands is in great part ascribable to the providential event of the King Pomare's conversion, and subsequent influence on his people. "Pomare was the *first* in the island (Otaheite) who made a profession of faith in the gospel." This was the beginning of that change in the religious profession of his people, which, under the countenance of his example, has since so rapidly prevailed.† "The congregation at Eimeo continued to increase rapidly. The king, after having been absent two years at Otaheite, returned, bringing with him a number of people who were all professed worshippers of the true God. A school which the missionaries had established was attended by upwards of two hundred, who made rapid progress in spelling, reading,

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\* See vol. i. pp. 215-16, and vol. ii. pp. 91-6.

† Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel in the South Sea Islands, Edin. 1826, pp. 23, 26, 30.

and writing." "The king sent a book with the queen for his daughter Aimata, which was looked upon as a public declaration that she was to be brought up in the new religion."

"Pomare employed himself in overturning idolatry, and destroying the gods and Morais. Places for divine worship were erected in every district; and Otaheite and Eimeo, soon became altogether in profession Christian countries."\* "At the island of Atui, they" (two European missionaries) "found the native teachers, from Borabora. They had been maltreated by the natives, stripped of their property, and greatly disheartened. The king of Atui consented to go out to sea in the Endeavour for two or three days. During this period, he was present at all the public religious services on board, and conversed much with the brethren. The result was, that he resolved to embrace Christianity; to destroy all his Morais, and to erect a chapel; and he immediately consented to use his influence in settling a native teacher in each of two other islands, of which he is also king, which was accordingly done."† So in Mr. Ellis's very interesting account of the abolition of idolatry in Hawaii (Owhyee), which in this singular instance preceded and made way for the introduction of a Christian mission, we learn that the king, Riho-riho, "had heard what Pomare and the Tahitian chiefs had done in the Society islands." Influenced by several secular motives, and encouraged by this example, he overthrew the ancient worship and priesthood; in consequence a war took place with a relative, who was urged on by the priests to defend the idolatrous system; the defeat of this chief and his adherents completed the king's design, and the American missionaries, who landed in 1820, found a "nation without any religion," fulfilling as it were that pecu-

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\* Narrative, &c.

† Abstract of 30th Rept. Lond. Miss. Soc. pp. 15—16.

her prediction, "the isles shall wait for his law."\* The influence of the queen, (we also find from Mr. Ellis,) "contributed very materially to the pleasing change that has recently taken place." "Long before many of the leading chiefs favoured the introduction of Christianity, Kamehamaru recommended her own servants to serve the living God; erected and patronized a school," &c.†

I shall not be suspected of wishing to extenuate the wonderfulness and delightful importance of these events. The hand of Providence, as well as the persevering energy of Christian benevolence, eminently appears in the successive and various means; and the power of divine grace, yet more eminently, in the genuine conversions which we learn to have accompanied or followed the outward changes. Let the history of these missions be accepted as a clear and striking intimation that modern Christians are *not* to wait for miraculous gifts: that on the contrary the divine author of their religion has designed, that the very superior knowledge of

\* Ellis's Tour in Hawaii, pp. 29—30, and 108—113, 4th edit.

† Ibid. pp. 462-3, abridged. There is something very remarkable in the influence exercised, in all ages and all lands, by the female sex towards the diffusion of Christianity. It would seem as if woman, by whom sin and sorrow are recorded to have first entered our world, were to be consoled by an eminent and continued instrumentality in conveying the great antidote to both. Even in the most imperfect national receptions of this faith, such as that of the ancient Poles and Russians, we have seen women the prime movers; and thus where they have not converted they have humanized our race. Priscilla, Tryphena, Tryphosa, the sister of Micislaus, the wives of Wlodomir and Ethelbert, Hannah More, Elizabeth Fry, Kamehamaru, and thousands beside, have humbly followed in the sacred train of her "whom all generations shall call blessed;" each contributing, according to the special designation of a gracious Providence, to repair the ruins of the fall.



Christian nations, and their opportunities for communicating this and every civil advantage, should be, as it were, *instead* of miracles, in disposing heathen princes and heathen people to attend favourably to the gospel.

But it would be most illogical, and not less perverse, to infer, from events thus oppositely circumstanced, that no miracles were *then* needed—when unlettered teachers, despised by the nations among whom they journeyed, and so far from being aided by kings and rulers, that they were in constant danger of public penalty or outrage, yet planted, and that deeply, the faith of Christ, in the most enlightened regions in the world.

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